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Spring 2020
Open Theme

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Volume XII Issue 3: Open Theme

Introduction and Editor's Note

One of the best parts of working with young children is their creativity and unique solutions to problems. The titles in this issue profile that same creativity in children, teens, adults and even imaginary creatures, telling the stories of the eye-popping, chuckle-inducing ways that characters approach solving serious problems.

Some of the titles involve ingenious ways to cross borders, both literal and societal. In *Between Us and Abuela*, a young girl figures out how to send a scarf across the wall dividing Mexico and the U.S. In *The Dark and the Light*, Shaggy and Sparkle devise a way to cross the gutter of the book into each other's space. In a similar but unique way, *Smon Smon* uses an imaginary language to welcome those who are "others." And in *The Prince and the Dressmaker*, a cross-dressing prince teams up with a young girl to give life to their creative fashion ideas.

Other titles involve solutions to unjust systems like racism, poverty and illiteracy. *This Promise of Change* tells the story of one student from the Clinton 12 who worked to integrate their high school in 1956. *Biblioburro* is the ingenious story of Luis Soriano and his two burros who travel all over rural Colombia to teach children to read and explore the world.

Finally, several titles profile children's creative minds at work. Mirandy uses magic to capture the wind and help her dance and win a prize in *Mirandy and Brother Wind.* Jette, a young 10 year old girl, presents her creative answers to questions about life and death in *Do Fish Sleep?* and a third-generation Korean-American creatively explains what makes her house a home in *This is Our House*.

We invite you to read and savor the creativity in these stories—that of the characters, the authors and the illustrators. As you read, consider submitting a review for our future issues. The editors welcome reviews of any children's or YA book that highlights intercultural understanding and global perspectives around these themes:

Volume 12, Issue 4 – Visual Narratives (Summer 2020) – submission deadline: May 15, 2020. Reviews of books with global or intercultural perspectives that are visual narratives, also known as pictorial books, wordless books, or silent books. These are stories where images tell the story with little or no written text.

Volume 13, Issue 1 – Open theme (Fall 2020) – submission deadline: August 15, 2020. Reviews of a children's or YA book that highlights intercultural understanding and global perspectives.

Co-Editors, Susan Corapi and Prisca Martens

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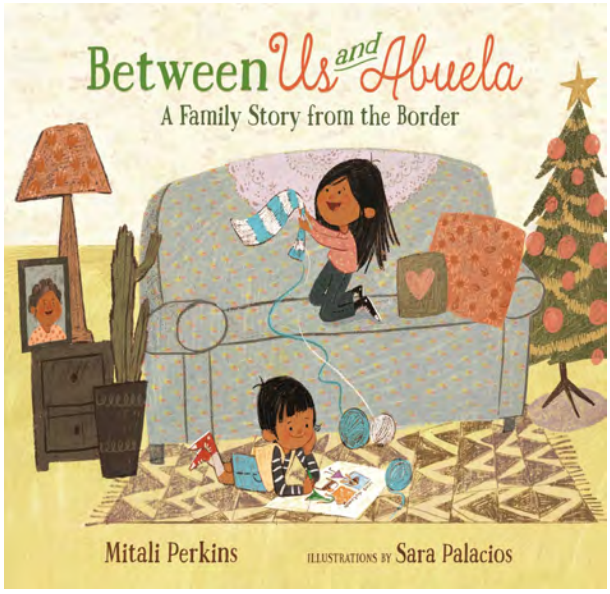

Between Us and Abuela: A Family Story from the Border
Written by Mitali Perkins
Illustrated by Sara Palacios
Farrar Straus Girouz, 2019, 32 pp.
ISBN: 9780374303730

After a year, María, Juan, and their mother are finally getting to visit Abuela. It's been a long time, so María hopes she can still be Abuela's angelita. The family takes a bus to Friendship Park in San Diego and after a long walk, they see "two high, strong fences along the border, reaching deep into the sea." They wait, finally hearing Abuela's voice, "Estoy aquí." They can't hug her, but they can touch fingers. Despite the strong fences, families in San Diego and Tijuana laugh, cry, and pray together. The thirty minutes goes too fast and when María is about to give Abuela a handmade scarf and a hand-drawn picture, a patrol officer states, "We can't let anything through the fence." María doesn't give up and finds a way to send the gifts over the fence into Abuela's arms.

Between Us and Abuela is based on the religious festival, La Posada Sin Fronteras (The Inn Without Borders), celebrated since 1993 between San Diego and Tijuana, Mexico, to remember the night the Holy Family searched for shelter before the birth of Jesús. The story, told from María's perspective, gives young readers access to a complex, unjust, and heartbreaking experience. The written text and the illustrations offer multiple opportunities for deep conversations and critical inquiries. For example, Juan's drawing is labeled, "Inns. No rume," offering a multimodal message about immigration and refugees. María's solution to build a kite to fly both gifts over the border invites dialogue on the role of children's agency in the search for humanity and justice. The border patrol officer who encourages María to fly her kite inspires readers to question and challenge how the officer is represented. The open-ended "We can't see through the fences, but I picture Abuela scurrying across the beach" creates space to imagine life beyond the book.

The digital illustrations allow the reader to see the high fences between the children and Abuela and between so many other families. Readers may want to compare the illustrations with actual photographs of the wall. The illustrations also convey movement and a sense of urgency, particularly on the double-spread page divided by three horizonal panels, showing María's attempts to fly the kite.

Between Us and Abuela can be paired with other books about the US/Mexico border such as *La Frontera: El viaje con Papá/ My Journey with Papá,* by Deborah Mills (2018) and *Dreamers* by Yuyi Morales (2018). The book can also be paired with other stories addressing physical divides like fences, such as *The Other Side* by Jackie Woodson and E.B. Lewis (2001), or walls, such as *The Wall in the Middle of the Book* by John Agee (2018).

Mitali Perkin was born in Kolkata, India and immigrated with her family to the US as a child. Her research on posadas, and particularly on La Posada Sin Fronteras is included as part of the Author's Note. This is her first picturebook. Readers can explore her novels on www.mitaliperkins.com.

Illustrator Sara Palacios was born in Mexico. She was a 2012 Pura Belpré honored illustrator for *Marisol McDonald Doesn't Match/Marisol McDonald no combina* (Monica Brown, 2011). Her illustrations and sketches can be found on www.sarapalaciosillustrations.com.

Maria Acevedo, Texas A&M University-San Antonio

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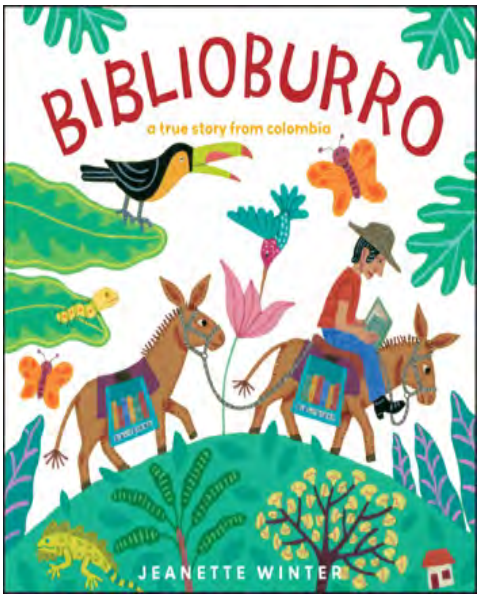

Biblioburro: A True Story from Colombia
Written and illustrated by Jeanette Winter
Beach Lane Books, 2010, 32 pp.
ISBN: 9781416997788

Luis Soriano loved reading as a child and eventually earned a degree in Spanish literature by studying with a professor who visited his village twice monthly. As he read more and more books, his wife expressed concern over storage of the books in their home. Luis decided to share not only his books, but his love of reading across northern Colombia by using two burros to carry the books, and traveling from village to village so children would have access to stories and by extension, the worlds within those stories. Based on true events, *Biblioburro* is a picturebook for young children chronicling Soriano's life as a traveling librarian.

Using pen-and-ink drawings filled with bright colors rendered in acrylic paint, Winter captures readers' imaginations and hearts. The straightforward storyline is easy to follow and serves as an inspiration for young readers in respect to sharing and caring about the literary and literacy lives of others, and to the love of reading. In many ways, this is an adventure story full of the romance of the Colombian hills, the expectant children who read "deep into the night" and of Soriano himself who always returns to his home and reads deep into the night.

While glossing over of the details of Soriano's life and the danger of his travels—he was held up at one point with a demand for his money—this book is ultimately a wonderful tribute to Soriano's work and life. A primary teacher by profession, Soriano understood the power of story and reading on his students' lives. This aspect of his life is not shared in the book, which leaves a reader without the full context of Soriano's connection to community and regional development, a vital aspect of his story that would enhance young readers' understandings of social and mutual responsibility for others. This book is a lovely read aloud for young children and a wonderful entrée into an inquiry for older readers about the world of traveling librarians and ways others share their love of literature.

Books that complement this text include the vast quantity of actual footage available on the internet about Soriano and his burros, Alpha and Beto. Books about traveling librarians include *That Book Woman* by Heather Henson and illustrated by David Small (2008), and *Down Shin Cut Creek: The Pack Horse Librarians of Kentucky* by Kathi Appelt and Jeanne Cannella Schmitzer (2019). Another picturebook about Luis Soriano is *Waiting for the Biblioburro* by Monica Brown and illustrated by John Parra (2011). Then there is *My Librarian is a Camel: How Books are Brought to Children around the World* by Margriet Ruurs (2005). Books about reading and the love of language include *Book* by George Ella

Lyon and Peter Catalanotto (1999); *The Word Collector* by Peter H. Reynolds (2018); *The Right Word: Roget and His Thesaurus* by Jen Bryant and Melissa Sweet (2014); and, the older but poignant, *More Than Anything Else* by Marie Bradby and Chris Soentpiet (1995). For older readers who want to read more about the traveling librarians under Roosevelt's Pack Horse Program in Kentucky and stories connected to its legacy throughout the 20th century, there is *The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek* by Kim Michele Richardson (2019) or Jojo Moyes' (2019) *The Giver of Stars.* Other books about writers and other librarians such as *The Librarian of Basra: A True Story of Iraq* also by Jeanette Winter (2005) and *The Librarian of Auschwitz* by Antonio Iturbe and translated by Lilit Thwaites (2017) would add to a unit on reading, the love of language, and those willing to live their beliefs in reading and literacy.

Author Jeanette Winter lives in New York City and has written over a dozen books for young readers. She won the Jane Addams Award for Books for Young Readers. Many of her books are biographies that include not only *Biblioburro*, but *Nasreen's Secret School* (2009), *My Name is Georgia* (1998) and *Malala, a Brave Girl from Pakistan* (2014). Her books often celebrate the courage of girls and women who dare to defy the status quo.

Holly Johnson, University of Cincinnati

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Do Fish Sleep?
Written by Jens Raschke
Illustrated by Jens Rassmus
Translated from German by Belinda Cooper
Enchanted Lion, 2019, 60 pp.
ISBN: 9781592702855

Jette sits on a bench, reflecting on getting one year older to reach the double-digit age of 10. Her brother will only get to be a single digit, six, his age when he passed away from a terminal illness. Jette struggles with feelings of grief and confusion that sometimes threaten to overwhelm her as she searches for answers. She recalls her brother's death and funeral as well as the special times she shared with him, including a frank discussion in which she tells him that heaven is a place where he can eat all the pizza he wants. The title of the book comes from several years earlier at the beach when she questioned her father about whether fish sleep. He mumbled a reply, a behavior now repeated by adults who act as if they know the answer to what happens after death, when they are actually unsure. This book acknowledges that children need ways to deal with life's big questions and challenges adults who offer surface-level answers that fail to respect children's ability to understand complexity and uncertainty.

This honest story of pain and grief over a sibling's death is narrated in first-person by Jette and illustrated with cartoonish drawings that accentuate the darkly humorous tone of her voice. Jette's strong voice reflects the story's origin as a one-girl play by the author, a playwright in Germany. A breakout success at the box office, the play received a 2012 Mülheimer Children's Theater Prize and the 2014 MDR Children's Radio Play Prize. The book is a best-seller in Germany and has been translated into several languages.

This honest and compelling portrayal of death and loss received a 2019 Batchelder Honor award. Another book that portrays children wrestling with death is *Cry, Heart, But Never Break* (Glenn Ringtved and Charlotte Pardi, 2016), where a group of children try to keep Death from taking their grandmother away until they realize death is not something to fear. This translation from Danish received the 2017 Batchelder award. Children find ways to celebrate the life of someone they have lost. In *Finn's Feather* (Rachel Noble and Zoey Abbott, 2018), a boy finds joy as he plays with a feather he believes was sent by his deceased brother, while *The Funeral* (Matt James, 2018) focuses on the play of young cousins at a funeral for a great uncle. Death is viewed within the circle of life in *An Ordinary Day* (Elena Arnold, 2020) in an ordinary neighborhood that turns out to be extraordinary. In *Maybe Tomorrow?* (Charlotte Agell and Ana Ramirez, 2019), Elba carries a heavy black suitcase of grief and sadness wherever she goes until she meets a friend who helps her let go of the heavy load. These picturebooks provide a text set to surround the reading of *Do Fish Sleep?* in powerful and moving ways. In addition, many novels deal with the death of a young person, including *Kira-Kira* (Cynthia Kadohata, 2004) and *The Thing About Jellyfish* (Ali Benjamin, 2015), while *Ways to Live Forever* (Sally Nicholls, 2008) is a diary written in the voice of a boy who has a terminal illness.

The author, Jens Raschke, is a well-known German author and children's theater playwright, who has received numerous drama awards. His most well-known play is *Do Fish Sleep?* Another play, What the Rhinoceros Saw When It Looked at the Other Side, won the German Children's Theater Prize and the Dutch-German Children's and Youth Drama Award. It deals with the tyranny of the Nazi era in a form accessible to children through focusing on a zoo in Buchenwald where children and animals look over the fence into a concentration camp. Raschke has been a festival organizer, cultural critic, playwright, and theater director.

Jans Rassmus is a draftsman, illustrator, and author from Kiel who studied illustration at the Hamburg HAW and the Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art in Dundee, Scotland. He has illustrated and written many other books, including illustrating *I Need All of It* (Petra Postert, 2018), about a boy who tells his father tales of why he needs to keep three objects found in his pocket at laundry time. His techniques range from large-scale paintings with acrylic to delicate watercolor and pen drawings. The two-toned drawings for this book are reserved and sharp-edged images that work with the text to interrupt and comment on each other.

The translator, Belinda Cooper, is an adjunct professor at NYU's Center for Global Affairs and Columbia University's Institute for the Study of Human Rights, where she teaches courses on human rights, international and transitional justice, and human's rights. She lived in Berlin, Germany for many years and worked closely with members of the East German opposition before the fall of the Berlin Wall. She has translated German-language books and articles for over 25 years, including many texts on Nazi Germany and the Holocaust and international criminal law.

Kathy Short, University of Arizona

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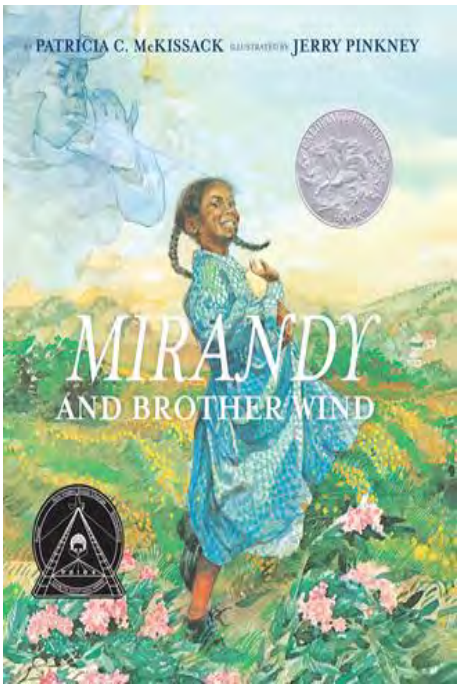

Mirandy and Brother Wind
Written by Patricia McKissack
Illustrated by Jerry Pinkney
Dragonfly Books, 1988, 32 pp.
ISBN: 9780679883333

McKissack tells the story of Mirandy's determination to win the junior cakewalk, a contest in which "walkers" are eliminated until the final couple wins the prize. To achieve her goal, Mirandy seeks help from her community. Mirandy's friend Ezel, Ma Dear, Grandmama Beasley, Miss Poinsettia, and the mythical Brother Wind guide her on her journey to becoming the winner of her first cakewalk. Pinkney's bright color scheme and realistic illustrations of the African American aesthetic emphasize the story's optimistic tone and early twentieth century setting.

Mirandy and Brother Wind has supernatural and fantastical tones. McKissack introduces Brother Wind as "coming high steppin', dressed in his finest and trailing that long, silvery wind cape behind him." Pinkney's illustrations depict Brother Wind as a flying, peculiar figure who has the features of an African American man yet has bluish-gray coloring. His sustained presence seems to have a magical effect as evidenced by Mirandy's statement, "Sure wish Brother Wind could be my dance partner at the junior cakewalk. I'd be sure to win." Ma Dear confirms his impact, "There's an old saying that whoever catch the Wind can make him do their bidding." Mirandy then goes to a conjure woman whom she hopes will help her catch the elusive Brother Wind. Brother Wind's origin and the conjure woman's methods are not developed. It can be argued that these developments are not relevant to the story; however, this absence brings up a point about genres in African American literature. Brooks and MacNair (2009), in their article on African American literature, point out that scholars see the need for increased African American characters in fantasy, and question if this lack is because fantasy is seen as harmful to Black characters. If this were expanded, Mirandy and Brother Wind could offer windows and doors into African American, particularly Southern, spirituality; nevertheless, this book's depiction of early twentieth century African Americans is evocative. Other aspects of the book can offer the reader mirrors, windows, and doors (Bishop, 2010).

Botelho and Rudman (2009) state, "The analysis of the representation process shows that meaning does not come directly from words but instead is re/presented in language (written or visual)" (p. 2). Pinkney's illustrations of African Americans gave me a mirror to think about my own features, complexion and hairstyles and that of my family. I saw myself represented. According to Sims (2010):

> Pinkney's approach involves the staging of scenes using models and photography. As a result, his characters always look like real, ordinary people. They are individualized and reflect the natural diversity of Black people. The history of Black imagery in children's books, and the desire to affirm the beauty and worth of Black people make the portrayal of Black characters in children's books an important consideration. (p. 233)

McKissack's use of dialect such as gon' instead of 'going to' and double negatives allowed me to affirm my speech patterns. However, usage of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) is not always viewed positively. Some African American readers may feel offended by the inclusion of AAVE in African American literature (Brooks & McNair, 2009). The dialect in this book, however, is a rich illustration of intracultural variations and shows the diversity that exists within cultures.

While reading this book, I received a window into early twentieth century African American culture. *Mirandy and Brother Wind* can be perceived as a mythical history lesson on bygone African American traditions, such as the cakewalk. According to McKissack's (1988) note, "First introduced in America by slaves, the cakewalk is a dance rooted in Afro-American culture. It was performed by couples. The winning couple took home a cake." This book sparked my curiosity as I was left with questions about cakewalks. In what African countries did cakewalks originate? Were slaves able to engage in cakewalks? Why did cakewalks fall out of popularity?

To explore supernatural and historical themes *Mirandy and Brother Wind* can be paired with Patricia McKissack's and Brian Pinkney's *The Dark-Thirty: Southern Tales of the Supernatural* (1992) and Robert San Souci's and Brian Pinkney's *The Faithful Friend* (1995). After reading the books students could write brief narratives involving those themes. Organizing a cakewalk would also be a rich experience for students.

Patricia McKissack authored numerous books about the African American experience, sometimes with her husband Fred, many of which won awards. Before becoming a writer, Patricia was a teacher and then editor of children's books, both of which propelled her into writing. Read more about her at http://www.patriciamckissack.com/

Jerry Pinkney has been illustrating children's books since 1964. He has won numerous awards for his work and also exhibits his art in museums. He considers himself a storyteller at heart which is what drew him to picturebooks. Jerry currently lives in New York. Read more about him at http://www.jerrypinkneystudio.com/

LaShanda Francis, University of Texas at Arlington

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Smon, Smon
Written by Sonja Danowski
NorthSouth Books, 2018, 32 pp.
ISBN: 9780735843073

If you're looking for a book that uses language with which you are familiar, this is not the book for you. There is, however, a deeper language at play in this picturebook that would be of interest to any reader looking for a book that portrays a more cosmopolitan sentiment in respect to Others, to loving the planet and all its inhabitants. If so, then welcome to Smon, Smon, a book that encourages such thinking, and would make a wonderful entrée into how mutual responsibility and cooperation can make a community, a region, and perhaps even the world, a better place.

Batchelder Honor recipient and author of *Little Night Cat* (2016) and *Grandma Lives a Perfume Village* (2015), Sonja Danowski once again gives readers a rich visual feast in Smon, Smon. Rendered in pen, ink, and watercolor drawings, this picturebook uses a universal language, obviously made up by Danowski, that translates to any reader the story of a journey into a place where cooperation and friendship across language and cultural groups rescue an individual who needs help and create an entire geocultural space. A fantastical, mysterious, and gender-neutral world, the planet Gon Gon (a planet on which perhaps we all wish we could live) is the home of the Smon Smon. Life consists of the daily chores of hanging ron rons next to Smon Smon's won won, which resides on a lon lon. After finishing that task, the Smon Smon floats away on its ton ton to where the lon lons and ron rons grow. As the story progresses, the planet Gon Gon seems to be a place where the inhabitants are protectors of other species as well as a place in which the inhabitants work cooperatively across species for the betterment of all, regardless of particular cultural traditions and ways of being in a peaceful world.

There is more to the story, but readers are invited to do their own explorations and use their own imaginations to travel through the world of the Smon Smons and their neighbors the Klon Klons. This is a rich book that is more deeply philosophical than its rhyming prose reveals on the surface. Many readers will want to take that deep philosophical dive and perhaps even play with a bit of language themselves. The book creates an open invitation to discuss languages across the globe and the concept that even if the language is not ours, the sentiments behind them probably are.

Books that would complement the theme of kindness in *Smon, Smon* include *I Walk with Vanessa: A Simple Story about Kindness* by Keroscoët (2018), *The Big Umbrella* by Amy June Bates and illustrated by Juniper Bates (2018), *All Are Welcome* by Alexandra Penfold and illustrated by Suzanne Kaufmann (2018), and *The Day You Begin* by Jacqueline Woodson and illustrated by Rafael López (2018). Books by Danowski would make an interesting unit on visual style and illustration, while older readers might find the

cosmopolitan sensibility within the book a way to look more closely at current sociopolitical rhetoric that often closes the door on acts of kindness, openness to the Other, and languages other than the dominant.

Sonja Danowski was born in Germany and currently lives in Berlin. She studied design in Nuremberg and currently works as an artist as well as an author and illustrator of picturebooks. She does not limit her work to children, suggesting that her work is for both children and adults. She has received numerous awards and has displayed her work across the world at numerous exhibitions. She has illustrated books for authors across the world including *Mountain Goats* (2017) by Cao Wenxuan (China), *The Beginning* (2012) by Paula Caballeira Cabana (Spain), and *The Forever Flowers* by Michael J. Rosen (USA). Her work, Excursion Flora (n.d.), which can be found at her website, is a wonder.

Holly Johnson, University of Cincinnati

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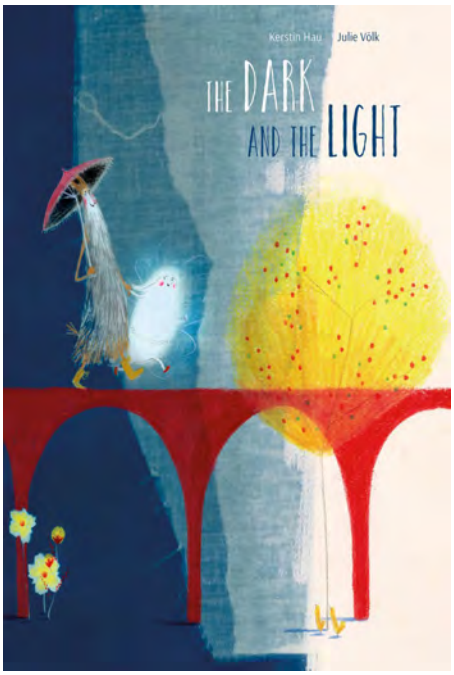

The Dark and the Light
Written by Kerstin Hau
Illustrated by Julie Völk
Translated from German by David Henry Wilson
NorthSouth Books, 2019, 32 pp.
ISBN: 9780735843851

Shaggy lives in the land of darkness. Sparkle lives in the land of light. Both creatures are lonely but one day they see each other across the shaded border between the dark and the light. Frightened, Sparkle runs away, but she ventures close to the border the next day and gets up the courage to respond to Shaggy's overtures of friendship. Eventually, through conversation in the borderland between dark and light, they become friends and visit each other's homes. Shaggy comes with a parasol and Sparkle with a flashlight. One day Shaggy goes to visit his friend Sparkle's home and it has disappeared! Distraught, he returns to his home in the land of the dark and finds to his surprise, that Sparkle is there. Together they decide that life as friends helps them weather sudden changes and they remain friends and live together in homes in the dark and the light.

While this story plot seems quite simple at first, the language and illustrations convey insights into what it means to cross borders and to adapt to another country or space that is unfamiliar. Shaggy longs to enter the place of shining colors but fears doing it alone. Sparkle has no desire to leave her sunshine and is afraid of the dark. But for both, their emotions of fear and rejection of what is different are juxtaposed with the curiosity they feel about the other land. Tentatively, they decide to "just go to the edge . . . have a quick look, and then come back." It is in the borderland, where the light is neither dark or light, rather gray-blue, that they meet and feel comfortable enough to begin to be friends. They each feel anxious as they begin to venture into the unknown of each other's land, but their fears are quelled because they are with a friend who is familiar with the new land.

This story has many themes, one being friendship with someone who looks different. It also communicates a theme of hope in adjusting to new ways of living. As the two friends adjust to the other's land, their coats adjust. Bright spots of light appear on Shaggy's dark coat as he becomes more comfortable in the new sun-drenched land. The same happens to Sparkle as she learns to live in the dark. The friends acknowledge that borderland living can have a positive outcome as "the darkness can never leave the coat completely. But a spotted coat is very beautiful." Their friendship in the borderland leads them to agree that there is "nothing better in the whole world than to have a friend who [understands] the need for a parasol and a flashlight." The story acts as a metaphor for the changes that occur as one adjusts to new spaces.

The illustration technique used literally fits the story of dark and light. Julie Völk used cyanotype, a photographic process in which objects are laid on solar paper, exposed to the sun, and then washed in water, leaving intense blue shades surrounding the "shadows" left

by the objects. The technique highlights the intense contrast between the lands of the dark and the light, but also gives visual strength to the borderland in between the two lands by "bleeding" the dark into the light.

Book titles that pair well with this unique book are ones that help readers think about crossing barriers, fences, and borders. *The Other Side* (Jacqueline Woodson and E. B. Lewis, 2001) explores the social barrier two girls cross as they sit on a shared fence between their yards. Like the blue-gray space between the dark and the light, the fence becomes the borderland where the two girls can become friends. An artificial line can also become a barrier that cannot be crossed. In *A Sky Without Lines*, Krystia Basil and Laura Borràs (2019) explore the divisions that occur when walls are built to keep people separated, not permitting the back and forth exchange of experiences that is characteristic of the borderlands. Finally, in *They Call Me Güero: A Border Kid's Poems*, David Bowles (2018) explores what it is like to be a pale-skinned red-haired Mexican American living in Texas, close to the border. The poems depict the tension of negotiating several cultures at the same time—a borderland experience.

Kerstin Hau was born in Darmstadt, Germany, where she works as an author and a specialized journalist. She studied other subjects (physiotherapy, media system design and children's media) but since 2015 she has devoted her creative talents to writing for children and adults. *The Dark and the Light* is her first book to be translated into English.

Julie Völk was born in Vienna, Austria, and studied in Hamburg, Germany, at the University of Applied Sciences. Her pictures tell stories about growing up, strange meetings and the peculiarities of life. Her delicate style (a unique technique with solar paper) appeals to the imagination because it combines realism with fantasy. She now lives and works in Austria. Her work has been honored by IBBY several times. In 2018, she was named an IBBY Honor Illustrator; her books have also been on the IBBY Honor List and received a White Raven award. In 2020 she received the Bologna Ragazzi Prize for My Favorite Memories, written by Iranian author Sepideh Sarihi (2020).

David Henry Wilson is an English playwright, novelist, and author of children's books. His Jeremy James series has been translated into many languages. He lectured in Konstanz, Germany, for many years and founded the university theatre. He translates a wide range of French and German books including children's novels, art history, travel books, poetry and literary theory. He lives in Sommerset, England.

Susan Corapi, Trinity Western University

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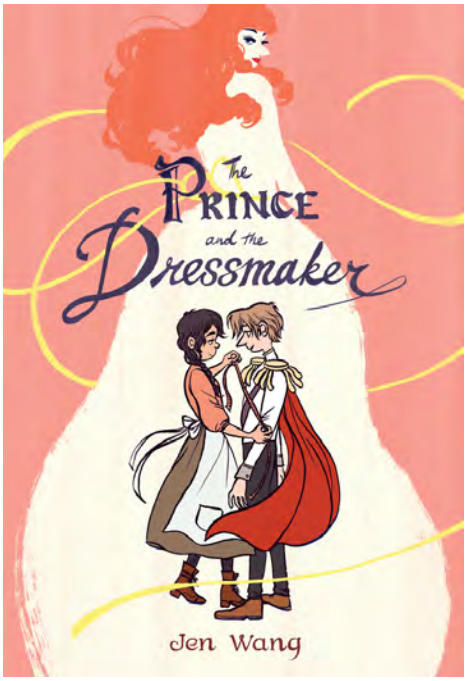

The Prince and the Dressmaker
Written and illustrated by Jen Wang
First Second, 2018, 288 pp.
ISBN: 9781626723634

Somewhere in Paris, Prince Sebastian of Belgium is hiding a secret. His parents think he is searching for a wife, but at night when alone in his dressing room, he instead dons his mother's elegant dresses and a long flowing orange wig. He becomes Lady Crystallia, someone so different that he finally feels like himself. He has everything he needs, except someone to whom he can tell his secret. And then he finds Frances. On the other side of the city, Frances dreams of creating beautiful dresses while working as a seamstress' assistant. When Sebastian stumbles across one of her original designs, he becomes enamored and whisks her away to become his own personal secret stylist.

Jen Wang's graphic novel follows Sebastian and Frances as they struggle to keep Lady Crystallia's real identity a secret as she quickly becomes a famous fashion icon thanks to Frances' designs and Sebastian's charisma. As they become closer, the secrecy begins to weigh on the two of them, and Frances decides to leave when protecting Sebastian's alternate identity prevents her from meeting her lifelong hero. Losing Frances sends Sebastian into a destructive spiral, which ends with his parents uncovering all of his secrets.

Sebastian had assumed his parents would not be supportive of his outfits, but they are more supportive than anyone could have imagined. His father, the king, volunteers himself and his guards to model Frances' designs to help Sebastian win back his best friend. The story ends with a touching celebration of friendship and a call of acceptance for gender nonconforming individuals with Frances and Sebastian both pursuing their dreams together with no more secrets.

Wang tells Sebastian and Frances' story through whimsical drawings, featuring lots of soft curving lines and, of course, many big flowing dresses. She pulls predominately on a pastel color palate, which provides a sense of childishness and innocence. This helps to engage the reader while introducing them to the serious issues discussed in the book, such as gender identity, stereotypes and family expectations

In the classroom, *The Prince and the Dressmaker* could easily be paired with similarly styled graphic novels like Molly Knox Ostertag's (2017) graphic novel *Witch Boy*, and Katie O'Neill's (2016) graphic novel *Princess Princess Ever After*, to examine gender norms and gender identity. *The Prince and the Dressmaker* could also be paired with the non-graphic young adult novels on gender identity, such as *If I Was Your Girl* by Meredith Russo (2018), *I Am J* by Cris Beam (2012), or Arin Andrew's (2015) autobiography *Some Assembly Required: The Not-So-Secret Life of a Transgender Teen*. In a different vein, it could also be used in conjunction with Angie Thomas' (2017) novel *The Hate U Give*, to look at how different situations ask us not to be true to ourselves and how students can stand up in those situations for who they are and what they believe in.

As a New York Times bestselling author-illustrator, Jen Wang has written numerous graphic novels, her most recent being *Stargazing* (2019). *The Prince and the Dressmaker,* however, has been her most successful. It has won numerous awards including the NPR Best Book of 2018, 2019 Children's and Teen Choice Book Awards, Teen Book of the Year, and a Boston Globe Best Children's Book of 2018. Wang works as a cartoonist, writer and illustrator in Los Angeles where she also acts as the co-founder and organizer for the comic festival Comic Arts Los Angeles.

Emily Ramser, Texas Woman's University

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This Is Our House
Written and illustrated by Hyewon Yum
Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2013, 36 pp.
ISBN: 9780374374877

Author/illustrator Hyewon Yum, a Korean immigrant herself, beautifully describes how a three-generation Korean immigrant family in New York City builds their own legacy on U.S. soil with familial love. Using the phrase "our house," the smiling girl on the cover serves as the narrator to state that the red-brick house behind her is inhabited by her beloved family members. The story starts with the girl's grandparents arriving in the U.S. on a wintery day with two suitcases. They go on to build their family and interweave their beautiful moments with the house, beginning with their daughter's (the narrator's mother) first steps to her marriage which starts a new family's history and legacy in the house.

The story does not explicitly include Korean immigrant struggles or their hardships, however, it sheds light on how this family grows together. The verbal and visual components highlight the linked lives of the immigrant family in the U.S. This linkage is created through every corner of the house and is embedded in the verbal components of the text. Every sentence starts with "This is where" followed by memories that are cherished by the family. The most remarkable example is "This is the front door where my mom left through when she went away to college. And this is the front door she came back through with the boyfriend who would be my father." The girl's mother grew up in this house, left to go to college, and returned with her boyfriend who eventually became a family member. Through this front door, two different pasts come together and a new family and a new generation begins. Also, it must be noted that the daughter (the narrator"s mom) brought a White American as her boyfriend, who was eventually welcomed as her husband. In addition to the linked lives of Korean immigrants, this picturebook sends the message of human interconnectedness without describing European Americans as saviors for struggling immigrants. The boyfriend who becomes the daughter"s husband is simply greeted and invited into the family.

The linked lives of this Korean immigrant family are also shown visually through the use of bright colors and rhythmical lines. The cheerful mood within the visuals seems to imply that building a happy family serves as a cornerstone to feeling appreciated and rooted whether in the original homeland or on foreign soil. More importantly, the foreign soil can turn into a home based on familial love that grows roots deep into the ground.

Readers will benefit by reading other books about Asian immigrants to learn more about their experiences in the U.S. and to expand young readers' understanding of racial diversity in the U.S. Stories about Asian immigrants' finding and building a home in the U.S. can help young readers think further about feeling rooted and finding a home away from the homeland. *A Piece of Home* by Jerri Watts and Hyewon Yum (2016) could be a perfect match for *This Is Our House*, because both picturebooks focus on Korean immigrant families and their journey of putting down roots in U.S. soil. A picturebook about a

Vietnamese immigrant family, *A Different Pond* by Bao Phi and Thi Bui (2018), also invites readers to think about the lives of immigrant families in the U.S.

Hyewon Yum is a Brooklyn-based author and illustrator, who was born, raised, and educated in South Korea until she came to New York City to study illustration in the MFA program at the School of Visual Arts. She is an author and illustrator of many picturebooks including *Bark in the Park* (2019), *Saturday Is Swimming Day* (2018), *This Is Our House* (2013), *The Twin's Blanket* (2011), and *There Are No Scary Wolves* (2010). She is known for her heart-warming stories that braid parents' love with children's creative imaginations on the canvas. She received the Ezra Jack Keats Award for her deft description of motherhood and childhood and its universal appeal both to parents and children in *Mom, It's My First Day of Kindergarten* (2012). For more information about the author, readers can visit her website.

Eun Young Yeom, University of Georgia

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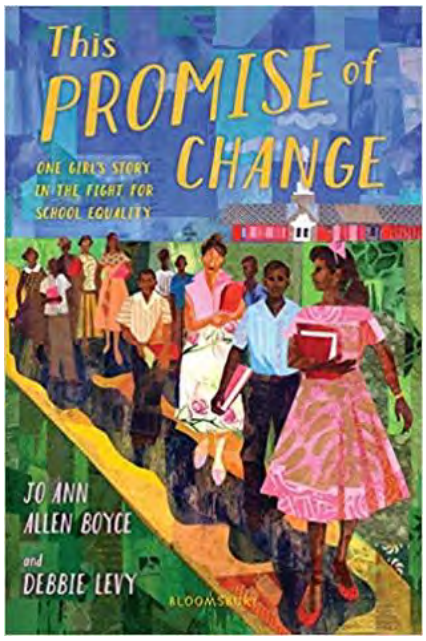

This Promise of Change: One Girl's Story in the Fight for School Equality
Written by Jo Ann Allen Boyce and Debbie Levy
Bloomsbury Children's Books, 2019, 310 pp.
ISBN: 9781681198521

In 1956, author Jo Ann Allen Boyce was one of twelve courageous students (and families) who integrated Clinton High School in Tennessee. The Brown v. Board of Education Supreme Court decision (1954) outlawed segregation in U.S. public schools. In January, 1956, Robert L. Taylor, a federal district judge in Tennessee, ruled that all-white Clinton High School must admit African American students. In the fall of 1956, Jo Ann was one of the students known as the "Clinton 12."

In this memoir in verse, Boyce retells the experience of having integrated her high school. The poems in this book are written in the voice of her teenage self. Her recollection and emotions ring true. She recalls the pride and hope she felt on the first days of school. "I can't help feeling prideful / (though pride caused many to fall) / to know I am one of twelve / to break this racial wall" (p. 71). She also shares the fear she had to overcome after an outside agitator fomented violence and the Ku Klux Klan burned crosses on lawns in her small town.

The support from family, fellow African American students and friends, and faith are evident throughout the book. The African American community in Clinton lived on a hill above the town. In the poem, "Down the Hill," Boyce shares her compassion for her mother. "To see me play the hand that we were dealt, / grim games with rules that change from day to day. / I felt it too, the dread, the hurt, the fear / of walking down our Hill to face the crowd" (p. 253). She also clearly conveys racially motivated violence, the bravery of a white pastor who escorted the students to school, the commitment of the school principal and some Clinton High teachers to uphold the law, and the indifference of the town mayor. "Lukewarm. / But law-abiding. / That puts Mayor Lewallen on our side. / With friends who call you 'a bitter dose,' / who needs enemies?" (p. 135).

After receiving death threats, Boyce's father moved their family to California after the 1956 fall semester. The author states, "Hatred leaves holes in the heart, a scarred mind, and a wasted brain—and I am speaking of its effects on those who hold this disease in their hearts and inflict it on others" (p. 272). Six of the twelve Clinton African American students remained in school until the end of that school year. Her friend Bobby Cain was the first African American male to graduate from an integrated state high school in Tennessee (1957), and Gail Ann Upton Epps, her best friend, was the first African American female graduate from Clinton (1958).

The book includes a scrapbook of primary source photographs from various sources including the author's own collection and The Life Picture Collection/Getty Images.

It also includes a timeline of school desegregation and civil rights landmarks, quotation sources, an epilogue, and biographical information about all Clinton 12 students and what happened to them after they integrated the school. The authors also include a selected bibliography and resources for further reading and viewing.

Interspersed in the book are headlines from newspapers of the time. "First Public School in Old South Integrated" (Los Angeles Times, August 28, 1956). "Agitator Fights U.S. Order Here: Influences People to Defy Laws, Threatens School Students" (Clinton Courier-News, August 30, 1956). "Tank-Led National Guard Quiets Town in Tennessee" (New York Times, September 3, 1956). "Shots Fired at Negro Home Here" (Clinton Courier-News, November 8, 1956). All together, these features of the book attest to its accuracy and authenticity.

This Promise of Change earned a 2020 Sibert Informational Book Honor Award; it was also the winner of the 2019 Boston Globe-Horn Book Award for Nonfiction. It was a New York Public Library Top Ten of 2019 and a Kirkus Reviews Best Book of the Year 2019.

This book can be paired with other titles by or about civil rights activist youth: *Claudette Colvin: Twice Toward Justice* (Phillip Hoose, 2009), *The Power of One: Daisy Bates and the Little Rock Nine* (Judith Bloom Fradin and Dennis B. Fradin, 2004), *Through My Eyes* by Ruby Bridges (1999), and *We've Got a Job: The 1963 Birmingham Children's March* (Cynthia Levinson, 2011). It can also be paired with books about other activist children and teens who have taken personal stands for social justice. These could include books by and about Malala Yousafzai, Pakistani advocate for girls' education, *Jazz Jennings: Voice for LGBTQ Youth* (Ellen Rodger, 2017), and climate activist Greta Thunberg's (2019) *No One is Too Small to Make a Difference.*

Boyce's coauthor, Debbie Levy, writes fiction, nonfiction, and poetry for young people (and adults). She notes, "A book in verse seemed a natural fit for Jo Ann's (musical) voice... we found that the emotional and often urgent cadences that poetry delivers were qualities that fit the story we set out to tell, not only the person at the center of the telling" (275). Poetic forms in the book include acrostic, ballad, cinquain, haiku, and more. In addition to This Promise of Change, Levy has authored several award-winning titles, including I *Dissent: Ruth Bader Ginsburg Makes Her Mark* (2016). For more information visit her website at: http://debbielevybooks.com/.

Judi Moreillon, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

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