

newcomers. *Language Arts*, 79 (5), 382-392.

Proust, M. (1913/1982). *Remembrance of things past*. [translated by C.K. Scott Moncrieff and Terence Kilmartin.] New York: Vintage Press.

Sandhu, M. (2005). Bindi! *Highlights for Children Magazine*, 60 (6), 8.

Simeen Tabatabai teaches reading to fifth graders at Southgate Elementary School in the North Colonie School District in Colonie, New York.

## **Expanding the Common Core Text Exemplar List with Global Literature**

by Michele Marx

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

## **Teacher Talk: Reading and Talking in a Professional Community**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Expanding the CCSS Text Exemplar List with Global Literature.**

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Literacy Experiences with Global Literature and the CCSS**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## References

Calkins, L., Ehrenworth, M., Lehman, C. (2012). *Pathways to the common core*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Lin, G. (2009). *Where the mountain meets the moon*. New York: Little Brown.

National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers. (2010a). *Common core state standards for English language arts and literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects*. Washington, DC: Authors.

National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers. (2010b). *Common core state standards for English language arts and literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects: Appendix B: Text exemplars and sample performance tasks*. Washington, DC: Authors.

Nieto, S. (2005). *Language, culture and teaching: Critical perspectives* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Routledge

Rosenblatt, L.M. (1995). *Literature as exploration* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Chicago: Modern Language Association of America.

Short, K. G. (2009). Critically reading the word and the world: Building intercultural understanding through literature. *Bookbird*, 2, 1-10.

Short, K. G. (2011). Reading literature in elementary classrooms. In S.H. Wolf, K. Coats, P. Enciso, & C.A. Jenkins, (Eds.), *Handbook of research on children's and young adult literature* (pp. 48-62). New York: Routledge

Michele Marx is Director of the Reading/Writing Learning Clinic of the Joan and Arnold Saltzman Community Services Center at Hofstra University.

## ∞ The Common Core Exemplar List and Books Worth Reading

by Joan Zaleski

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

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

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

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

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

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



What I learned this year:

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



## ∞ Finding Quality Global Children’s Literature

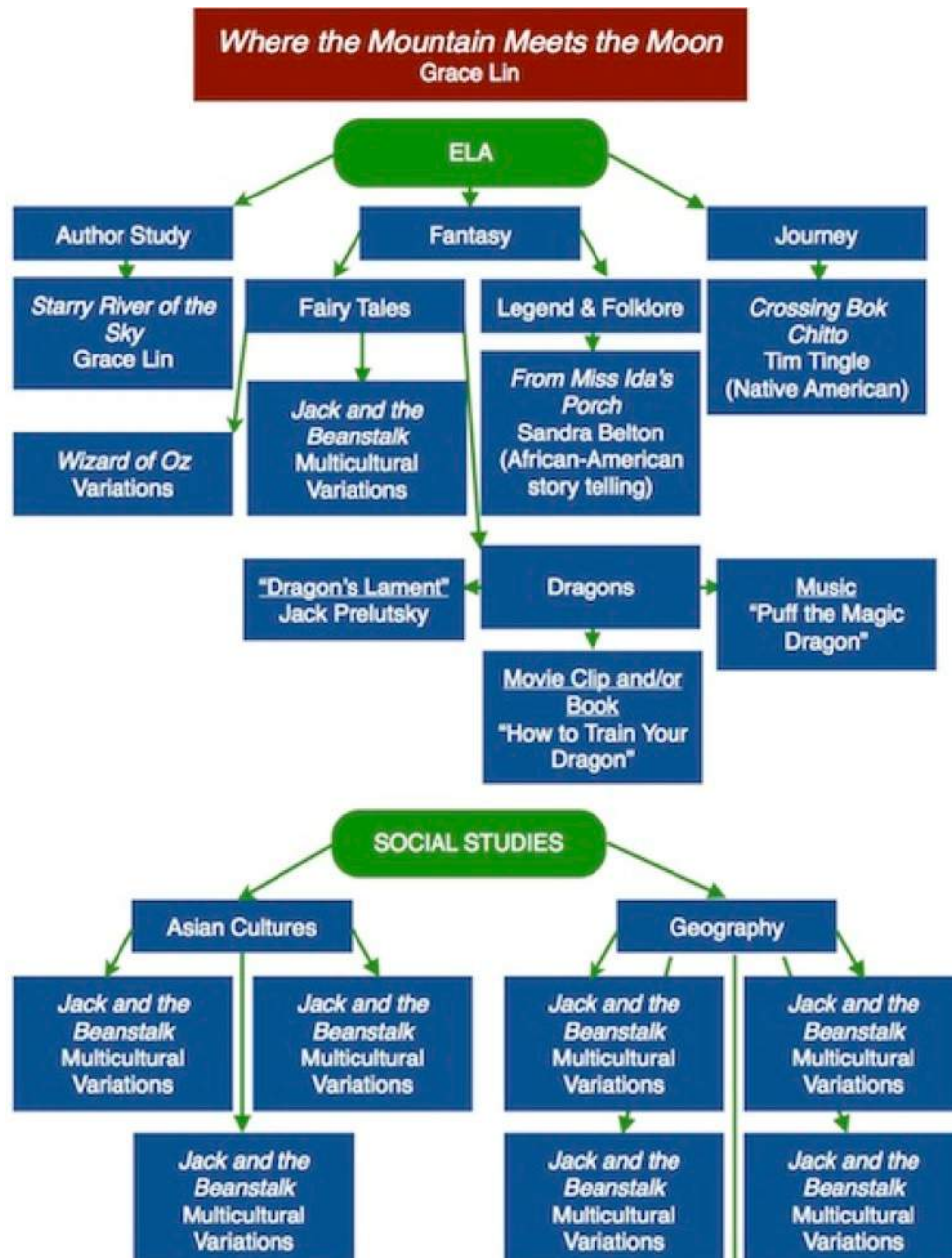
by Angela Buffalino-Morgan

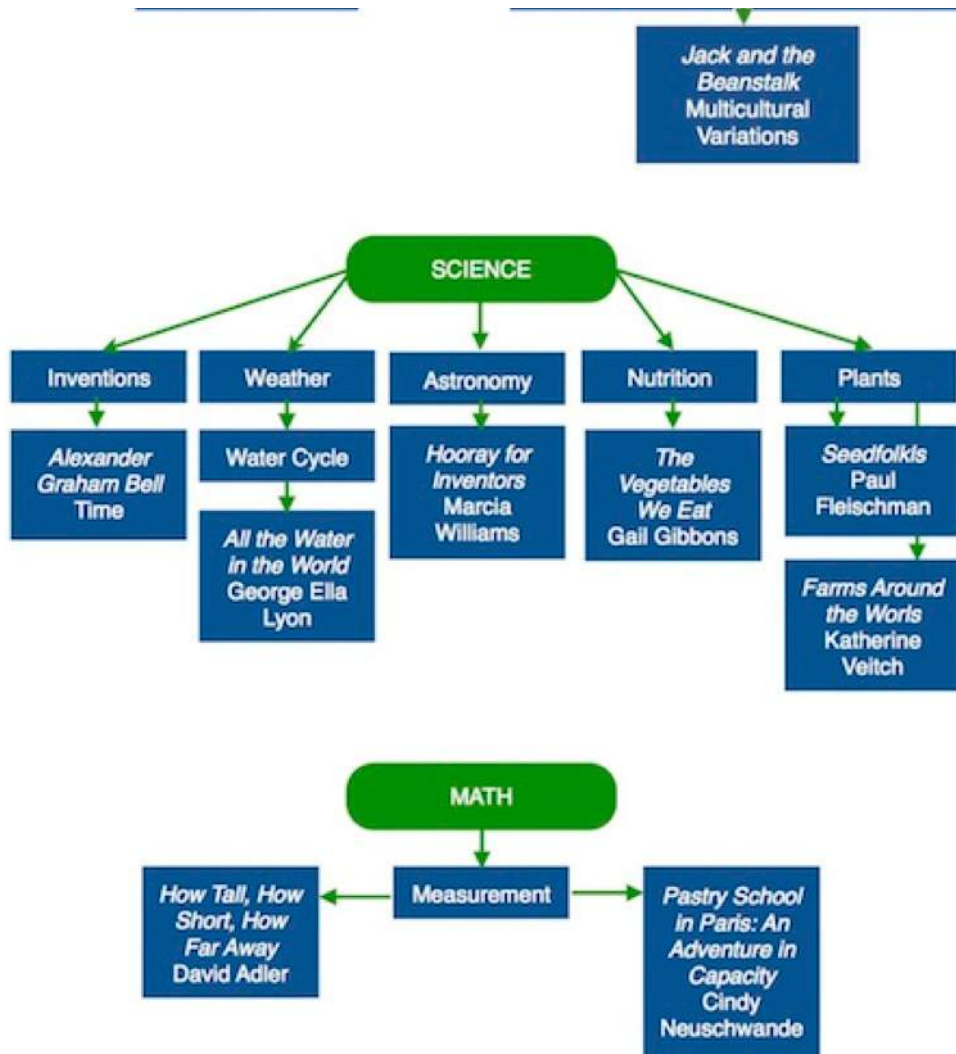
I sat around the table with my Teacher Talk group feeling inspired. Our monthly meeting of educators comes together to share ideas and support one another in our professional work. On this particular evening in January, we were discussing children’s literature and what we identified as an obvious need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

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

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

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





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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

by Esmeralda Carini

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### References

Harvey, S. and Goudvis, A. (2007). *Strategies that work: Teaching comprehension for understanding and engagement*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.

Hiebert, E. (2012). The CCSS text exemplars: Understanding their aims and use in text selection. *Reading Today*, 30(3), 6-7.

Lin, G. (2009). *Where the mountain meets the moon*. New York: Little Brown.

Short, K. (2009). Critically reading the word and the world: Building intercultural understanding through literature. *Bookbird*, 2, 1-10.



National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers. (2010b). *Common core state standards for English language arts and literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects: Appendix B: Text exemplars and sample performance tasks*. Washington, DC: Authors.

Joan Zaleski is Associate Professor Emerita from Hofstra University, where she taught courses in children's literature and literacy.

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

Esmeralda Carini is the Content Literacy Specialist for Kailua/Kalaheo Complex, Windward District in Kaneohe, Hawaii.

## **Global Themes in Poetry Backpacks**

by Stephanie Annunziata

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

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

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