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WOW REVIEW

READING ACROSS CULTURES
VOLUME VII, ISSUE 2

December 2015

Movement, Transition, and Change across Time

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WOW Review: Volume VIII Issue 2
December 2015

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WOW Review VIII, Issue 2
Movement, Transition, and Change across Time

Introduction

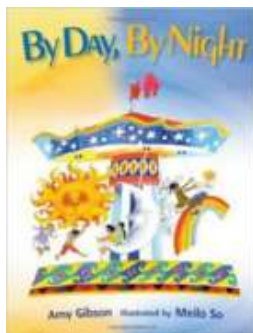
This issue of *WOW Review* is filled with amazing books addressing movement, transition, and change over time. With both picture book and chapter formats, the reviews highlight books that cross genres, including historical fiction, informational text, realistic fiction, and graphic memoir. These books present readers with experiences from around the world, including China, Russia, Turkey, Mexico, India, Israel, Ghana, and the United States. What is especially helpful is the additional texts each reviewer has included that readers might find of use in a classroom.

Books about movement include *Xochitl and the Flowers*, *Powder Necklace*, and *Dance of the Banished*. Each highlights the changes that occur within the protagonists when they must move from one country to another. Movement is also highlighted in two informational texts, *Mad about Monkeys!* and *Watch Out for Flying Kids!* about the movement of beasts and children growing up within their own cultural groups. *By Day, By Night* is a lovely picture book that highlights the transition from day until night as the sun circles the earth. And then there are books about change over time. Those include *A Year without Mom*, *The Seventh Most Important Thing*, *Fiona's Lace*, *Little White Duck*, and *In the New World: A Family in Two Centuries*, all of which take readers on journeys into how time and movement come together to create something new. The journey is not always pleasant, but there is something to learn.

All of these books open the doors to learning about others as well as ourselves. What different lives we all lead and look what it took for us to get here! Enjoy!

The next volume of *WOW Reviews* is due February 15, 2016, and is an open theme. Think about sharing your winter reading with the rest of us.

Holly Johnson, Editor.



Book Review: *By Day, By Night*
Written by Amy Gibson
Illustrated by Meilo So
Boyd's Mills Press, 2014, 32 pp.
ISBN: 9781590789919

This picture book is a treat to share with preschool and kindergarten

children. Author Amy Gibson and illustrator Meilo So celebrate how people all over the world are connected by highlighting similar activities that people accomplish throughout the day and night. The lyrical, rhyming text starts at day break with illustrations showing six children covered by a bright morning quilt. The children yawn and stretch to meet the new day. Multiple activities move readers throughout the day. The book and the day ends with text and illustrations that echo the beginning of the book by showing the same six children sleeping through the night covered with a quilt of stars and a crescent moon. The final page shows a young girl rising to meet the new day by opening her window to the morning. In the background a globe and world map are featured on her bedroom wall.

The text and illustrations combine to create a feeling of comfort and joy in the universal activities and lifetime movements that are shared around the world. “We’re carried first and swaddled tight. We toddle till we walk aright.” The colorful illustrations for this two page spread show mothers from different cultures carrying babies on their backs or fronts and then a father holding the hands of a baby just learning to walk. People of different races and cultures are shown across the illustrations with an emphasis on what we all have in common yet experience differently because of geographical variations.

Meilo So uses pencil and watercolor illustrations backed by white to set off her lively people. The illustrations are varied from spread to spread. Some are large scenes, others show small activities sprinkled across the page. My favorite pages read, “We learn to read; books open doors to worlds we’ve never known before.” The bright, detailed pictures expand and extend the words by showing seven different books—some open, some not. One red cover for *Treasure Island* features a swash-buckling pirate; another shows an open door that a student who is graduating strides through; a board book has babies sitting in front of it learning about counting and numerals; another shows the text in Chinese; and the open cover of another shows a library stamp.

One problem in the illustrations is that people from African countries are shown living in small villages, carrying loaded baskets on their heads. It would have been more representative of modern Africa to show scenes in cities as well as life in smaller villages. One colorful illustration of a Caribbean setting does show a fundraiser for a steel band with islanders in colorful, modern dress, enjoying a display of tasty foods for sale.

Read this book aloud to young children. It offers a wealth of opportunities for enjoyment and discussion. There is much to talk about and consider in the illustrations. For example, the pages that show boys and girls playing soccer will invite conversation about ways children play ball as well as how friends enjoy each other’s company. Pair this book with *All the World* (Liz Scanlon, 2011) or other texts such as *Everybody Eats Rice* (Norah Dooley and Peter Thornton, 1992) or *Kids Around the World Celebrate: The Best Feasts and Festivals from Many Lands* (Lynda Jones, 2010).

Born in the United States, Gibson has traveled extensively and spent several summers in South Africa. After college she became a teacher and wrote books to give students a better

understanding of the world. Gibson has donated her proceeds from the book to The Global Orphan Project. More about her can be found on her website.

Meilo So was born in China, grew up in Hong Kong and went to school in the United Kingdom. She currently lives in the Shetland Islands. More about So and her work can be found at her website and at papertigers.

Marilyn Carpenter, Eastern Washington University



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Based on a work at <http://wowlit.org/on-line-publications/review/volume-viii1-2/>



Book Review: Dance of the Banished
Written by Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch
Pajama Press, 2015, 227 pp.
ISBN 139781927485651

As the train pulled away, I looked out the window at the growing crowd, wondering if I would ever come back here again (p. 81).

In 1914, Ali gets lucky when Yousef, a village member, is too sick to make the journey from Anatolia (now modern day Turkey) to Canada for work. Ali is selected to go in Yousef's place, but that means leaving behind his fiancé Zeynep. He cannot stay, but feels guilty for going. Zeynep both understands and yet is angry that Ali must

leave. First divided by anger, then geographical distance, and eventually World War I, *Dance of the Banished* is about the fate of two young people of Kurdish Alevi descent as they negotiate life in Canada and Anatolia when they are caught within the hysteria of the war. Not Turkish, Armenian, or Muslim, the Kurdish Alevi were often victims of those biased against particular groups within the Anatolia region.

Dance of the Banished is based on true accounts about Alevi Kurds who were victims of war in Anatolia and the Canadian government's internment camps in Ontario during World War I. The novel sheds light on the subtleties of cultural groups within geographical regions and their fate at the hands of the more powerful. Ali is in Canada, but is declared an "enemy alien" and considered part of 100 men falsely accused of a bomb plot and sent to an internment camp. Zeynep leaves her village in Anatolia to work with Christian missionaries who visited her village, hoping that by going with the missionaries she will find a way to get to Ali in Canada. Once in the city, however, the war disrupts Zeynep's plans and she becomes witness to how the Turkish Revolutionary Forces treat Armenian Christians. She then becomes even more determined to find a way to get to Canada and Ali.

A dynamic and compelling story with likeable and realistic characters, this fictionalized narrative about how war often makes no distinctions between cultural groups will appeal to middle and secondary readers interested in history, romance, and how political movements on an international scale often wreak havoc at the local and individual levels. A deeply engaging plot that addresses many of the nuances of World War I, this book will make a great companion to Sanders' series, *The Rachel Trilogy*, as well as *Between Shades of Gray* (Ruta Sepetys, 2012), which also address the concepts of movement, transitions, and how politics disrupt individual lives. It could also be used in a text set with books addressing the treatment of foreign nationals across the globe, such as *So Much for Democracy* (Kari Jones, 2014), *Weedflower* (Cynthia Kadohata, 2009), and even Wadsworth Longfellow's classic poem *Evangeline: A Tale of Acadiell*, which addresses the expulsion of French settlers from Nova Scotia.

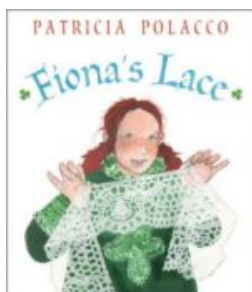
Marsha Fourchuk Skrypuch was born in Canada, and currently resides in Brantford, Ontario. She has published numerous books about those whose stories are not often told, including six books on the Armenian genocide. Skrypuch has an author's note that includes pictures of those within the internment camp as well as information about the sources of her story. More information can be found at her facebook page or at Goodreads.

Holly Johnson, University of Cincinnati



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Book Review: Fiona's Lace

Written by Patricia Polacco

Simon & Schuster/Paula Wiseman Books, 2014, 48 pp.

ISBN: 101442487240

This generational story focuses on a poor lace-making family in Ireland who decide they must journey to America. It is a familiar story of hardship and unjust working conditions that immigrants encounter in the U.S. as well as their expectation of riches. Polacco uses pencils and acetone markers for her naturalistic illustrations on full pages and across double spreads. The settings and the costumes of the characters are all of the period and place. Lace fills the end pages, along with Polacco's note about her feelings concerning the lace and her family's legacy.

Times were hard in all of Ireland so when the mill closes, many families are forced to leave all they know to seek work elsewhere. When passage to America becomes available, Fiona and her

family travel to Chicago. They find work in domestic service to pay back their passage, and at night Fiona turns tangles of thread into a fine, glorious lace. Not long after they leave Ireland for Chicago, the chaos of the Great Chicago fire that starts near their tenement separates Fiona and her sister Annie from their parents. Fiona helps her parents find them by cutting up her own precious lace to leave a trail similar to the one her mother created in Ireland as a trail from the mill where she worked as a young woman to her home so her eventual husband could be introduced properly introduced to her father.

Books that could be used in a text set with *Fiona's Lace* include *My Name is Sangoel* (Karen Lynn Williams, 2009), *he Name Jar* (Yangsook Choi, 2003), and *Migrant* (Maxine Trottier, 2011), all of which address movement from one place to another along with the situations young people go through to acclimate to their new surroundings.

Patricia Polacco grew up in California and Michigan, spending her school years in Oakland, California and summers in Michigan. She describes her family members as marvelous storytellers. She is a museum consultant on the restoration of icons, and a participant in many citizen exchange programs for writers and illustrators. She is also deeply involved in urban projects in the U.S. that promote the peaceful resolution of conflict and encourage art and literacy programs. More information about Polacco can be found on her website.

Susan Osiago, Tucson Unified School District, Tucson, AZ



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Based on a work at <http://wowlit.org/on-line-publications/review/volume-viii1-2/>



Book Review: In the New World: A Family in Two Centuries

Written by Christa Holtei

Illustrated by Gerda Raidt

Translated by Susi Woofter

Charlesbridge, USA, 2015, 40 pp.

ISBN: 9781580896306

With accompanying detailed pencil illustrations, this informational text invites readers to experience the journey of German emigrants to America in the 1860s. Robert Peters is a peasant farmer and linen weaver, who lives with his wife and two children in a small village in Germany. Because of the severe economic conditions, they decide to leave for America in search of a better life. They carefully plan for the trip and pack within the restrictions of a single trunk items such as the family photo, an accordion, a pocket watch, Robert's grandmother's necklace, seeds, a clock, silverware, and food.

The journey takes six weeks to cross the ocean, and the family lands in post-Civil War New Orleans. They pass through passport control and undergo medical examinations. But their journey is still not over. They do not stay in New Orleans, but are transferred to Omaha, Nebraska via St. Louis, Missouri by a riverboat, train, and covered wagon, which takes them on a journey of over a month. On the way to Omaha, they meet other Germans and people who have migrated from Scandinavia, Switzerland, Ireland, and England, providing support throughout the long journey. When they arrive in Omaha, the family is exhausted, but healthy, and immediately starts preparations for their new life; building their own house and farm, growing plants using the seeds they brought from Germany, making new friends, and mastering the English language. Thanks to the Homeland Act, they are able to cultivate their new life successfully.

Almost 150 years later, a twelve-year-old girl, Olivia Peters, who is a direct descendant of the family, learns about her family history while working on a school project. She lives on a large farm that five generations of the Peters family have built up over the years. Olivia and her parents and brother explore their family roots, carrying out research on the Internet and consulting books. They also investigate their ancestor's migration experiences by looking at items brought from Germany, such as tickets for a steamship and a pocket watch. Intrigued by the story of their ancestors, they travel to their ancestral home in Germany to find out more about their history.

This fascinating book can be paired with other stories of United States immigrants, such as *When Jessie Came Across the Sea* by Amy Hest and P.J. Lynch (2003), the story of a young girl's journey from Eastern Europe, *The Memory Coat* by Elvira Woodruff and Michael Dooling (1999), which relates the experiences of Russian emigrants, and *Fiona's Lace* by Patricia Polacco (2014), which is based on the story of an Irish family. The combination of these books will provide readers with an opportunity to better understand, from a variety of perspectives, the

ways that people emigrated to America and their reasons for doing so. One noteworthy aspect of this book is that the story is told from a German, not American point of view.

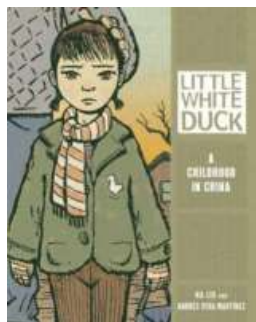
Christa Holtei lives in Germany. She has studied English literature, philosophy, and education and has also worked as an author and translator at the Heinrich Heine University in Dusseldorf. Gerda Raidt is a highly acclaimed illustrator in Germany and has published numerous books. Susi Woofter is a German-English translator who is based in the U.S. She is interested in the German language and culture and lived in Germany for several years.

Junko Sakoi, Tucson Unified School District, Tucson, AZ



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Based on a work at <http://wowlit.org/on-line-publications/review/volume-viii1-2/>



Book Review: Little White Duck

Written by Na Liu

Illustrated by Andrés Vera Martínez

Graphic Universe, 2012, 96 pp.

ISBN: 9780761381150

No story is more authentic than an author's own personal experience such as the one conveyed in this graphic novel. Na Liu, the author, shares her childhood experiences in mainland China in the 1970's through eight short stories featuring a young protagonist named Da Quin. One story presents the story of when the family welcomes a second child into the family, little sister Xiao Quin. Another story addresses what Da Liu learns about her own privileged lifestyle when she visits her father's hometown. Through Da Quin's stories, readers get a real sense of China during the 1970s.

Andrés Vera Martínez, the illustrator of *Little White Duck*, illustrated his wife's Na Liu's memoir in a sequential art form. Even though Andrés' illustrations give readers ample information on China back in the 1970's, some readers may not have sufficient background knowledge of China, and thus find it difficult to understand some episodes in the text and will need to do further research. For example, readers may not know about the Chinese leader, Chairman Mao Zedong, who founded the People's Republic of China, and so have difficulty understanding the reason why people in China were deeply saddened when Mao died. Children in the United States in the 2010s may also find Da Quin's childhood quite different from theirs. In fact, some of episodes in *Little White Duck* may be shocking, such as the episode where Da Quin brings three rat tails to school as evidence of contributing to pest control. Children will also learn that Da Quin would have had no siblings if her sister Xiao Quin had been born a little later because of the one child policy in China. Whether children find some episodes shocking or entertaining, Da Quin's stories help young readers to see a dynamic period of time in China.

Little White Duck will attract a wide range of readers from elementary students to adult readers. Since the protagonist Da Quin is in elementary school, children in her age group may like to read about her and learn about children's lives in China in the 1970's. Older readers with some background knowledge on China may find that this book gives them an insider's perspective on people's lives in China in 1970's. The graphic novel format will also attract readers who appreciate sequential art.

If readers want to compare children's lives in the 1970's in different countries, stories like *Brown Girl Dreaming* (Jacqueline Woodson, 2014) and *Inside Out & Back Again* (Thanhha Lai, 2013) can be read together with *Little White Duck*. Pairing with nonfiction books about China will help establish more background information on China in that time period.

Na came to the United States as a medical researcher and Andrés is from Texas. In the author's note, Na noted that her husband Andrés liked to listen to her childhood stories and told her that she had a unique childhood. Andrés's authentic illustrations not only teach readers about

Chinese culture, but also help them visualize Na Liu's life. Readers who enjoy Andrés' beautiful illustrations can find more information on him and his books at on his website.

Jongsun Wee, Winona State University



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Based on a work at <http://wowlit.org/on-line-publications/review/volume-viii1-2/>



Book Review: Mad About Monkeys

Written by Owen Davey

Flying Eye Books, 2015, 32 pp.

ISBN: 978190926574

Monkeys are a very social bunch and like to communicate and be with each other, just like we do! (n.p).

The world is full of monkeys, all kinds of monkeys, doing all kinds of monkey things, including their movements and changes in the monkey world over time and location. What are those things, and exactly where in the world are they? This book will tell you, along with an explanation of what a monkey is, the types that exist, and how they behave wherever they are! The book also describes a typical monkey's diet and abode and the traits of the world's most evolutionarily successful monkeys.

This informational book is filled with interesting facts about Old and New World monkeys, their genealogy, and examples of Old and New World groups. Beginning with the front cover and end papers through the entire book, readers will be delighted with the engaging illustrations and have the opportunity to think through monkey myths, the current challenges to monkey survival, and some of the pesky antics monkeys demonstrate that often get them in trouble. A book truly for monkey fans young and old, this is a wonderful book for inquiry learning, to inspire curiosity, or for making comparisons to actual photos of monkeys for further reading.

Mad about Monkeys would make a terrific addition to a text set on primates, including books like Jo Ottaviani's (2015) *Primates: The Fearless Science of Jane Goodall, Dian Fossey, and Biruté Galdikas*, which adds insight into those who study primates, and Jennifer Curtis' (2015) book *Primate School*, filled with photographs of primates.

A lovely picture book using both physical and digital work, *Mad about Monkeys* contains a colorful and graphical mid-century illustration style. Owen Davey's work is clearly recognizable while also similar to the work of Charlie Harper in respect to his work on birds. This book can inspire young artists and their interest in technology. Davey's online interview on his work as an illustrator explains more of his style and why he chooses to work within the constraints of mid-century design.

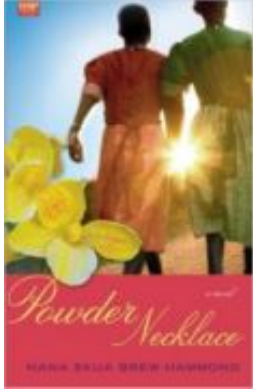
Owen Davey is a free-lance illustrator who lives in Leicester, United Kingdom. His illustrated works have been published on every continent except Antarctica and he was shortlisted for the 2015 World Illustration Award. In his spare time he bakes cakes, reads books written for young people, and plays in a band. More information about Davey and his work can be found at his website. Additionally, see an interview with Davey.

Holly Johnson, University of Cincinnati



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Based on a work at <http://wowlit.org/on-line-publications/review/volume-viii1-2/>



Book Review: Powder Necklace

Written by Nana Ekua BrewHammond

Washington Square Press, 2010, 280 pp.

ISBN: 9781439126103

Lila lives in London with her divorced mother. The mother-daughter relationship is strained, leading to Lila being sent to live with her aunt and uncle in Ghana within the first few pages. She spends a brief time with her relatives and is then sent to Dadaba, an exclusive, all-girls boarding school. In Ghana, Lila learns valuable lessons about life and her true identity.

Based on the author's life, *Powder Necklace* differs from the archetypal diaspora story of leaving the east for the west. Instead, the novel resists cultural imperialism by positing the reclamation of Africa and its traditions and culture. For example, when Lila cries about returning to London immediately after arriving in Ghana, her mother responds, "This will be good for you. You'll learn about Ghana" (p.20). A few pages later, Lila's aunt reiterates this message, saying, "Take this opportunity to learn a new way of doing things" (p.23). The idea of returning home to learn about one's self and culture is not foreign to diasporic people. The Akan people, who occupy Ghana and the Ivory Coast, subscribe to the concept of *Sankofa*. The symbol for *Sankofa* is a mythical bird flying forward with its head turned backward. There is an egg in the bird's mouth, depicting the gem of the past upon which wisdom is based and from which generations will benefit. This symbol is often associated with the proverb, "Se wo were fin a wosankofa a yenyi," which translates to "It is not wrong to go back for that which you have forgotten" (Kanu, 2011, p. 25-34).

Sankofa is complicated in *Powder Necklace* because Lila cannot remember what she has never known. She has lived far removed from her parents' homeland and culture and so operates almost entirely within the scope of being British. Throughout the novel, Lila continues to search for identity as she moves between London, Kumasi, Cape Coast and the United States. Each location and relocation affects her development. She finds herself shifting loyalties and identification before finally discovering her own answers. In the end Lila reflects most on what she learned in Ghana, "Maybe the point was to keep your head up—wear your powder necklace—no matter what" (p. 276).

This book can be included in a text set around the theme of migration and the maternal. Three other novels from the African diaspora that feature black, female adolescent protagonists who leave home on a journey of becoming include Coe Booth's (2010) *Kendra* (United States), Adwoa Badoe's (2010) *Between Sisters* (Ghana) and Lynn Joseph's (2013) *Flowers in the Sky* (Dominican Republic).

Powder Necklace, Brew-Hammond's debut novel, is a fictionalized account of her own experience. Nana Ekua Brew-Hammond was born in the United States and raised in Queens, New York. When she was twelve-years-old, she and her siblings were sent to attend a boarding school in their parents' home country of Ghana. She reports feeling "divorced from who she

was,” and said she wanted to capture her thoughts about “decisions being made for girls” (Fredua-Agyeman, 2010). This is what led her to write a transcontinental young adult novel about Lila Adjei, a fourteen-year-old girl of Ghanaian descent.

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Book Review: *The Seventh Most Important Thing*

Written by Shelley Pearsall

Alfred A. Knopf, 2015, 278 pp.

ISBN 9780533497281

On the other side, he found seven letters carefully cut out of silver metallic foil and glued on the cardboard, which had been covered with purple paper. Arthur's breath caught in his throat as he read them. The seven letters spelled out two words: FEAR NOT (p.265)

This realistic middle grade novel set in Washington, D.C. addresses loss, grief, and the healing power of art and community. The death of a parent is life-altering, and no one knows that better than Arthur T. Owens, the thirteen-year-old protagonist in this heart-wrenching and hopeful contemporary novel. At the start of the story, Arthur's father has been killed in a motorcycle accident. Arthur doesn't know if Dad, who was no angel, has gone to heaven: "Arthur wasn't sure. About heaven or anything else. He had a lot of doubts." His grief turns to anger in need of a target—and he hurls a brick at the Junk Man, a vagrant who forages in trash cans. Arthur has a reason for this terrible act. Still, he is arrested and briefly held in juvenile hall. Fortunately, the Junk Man, aka Mr. Hampton, convinces the judge to sentence Arthur to 120 hours of community service. Arthur has to collect "seven important things: "light bulbs, foil, mirrors, pieces of wood, glass bottles, coffee cans, cardboard" for the Junk Man's art project, his vision of heaven.

Young people who have experienced a serious loss will read *The Seventh Most Important Thing* with empathy and interest. Through the story's twists and turns, they will stay on board with Arthur, whose authentic teenage voice mixes toughness, hurt, and humor. Only by learning to be honest with himself and others will he overcome his grief. A loner, he gradually starts to let others in. With his new friend Squeak's help, Arthur pushes a grocery cart through snow and rain to scavenge the Junk Man's objects. His determination to fulfill his duties for the Junk Man becomes an appreciation for art's ability to rise above death and a sense of community with the people (including his stern but soft-hearted parole officer and tattoo artist) in his life. The clock is ticking, though. There will be another death in the story, and more unexpected changes in Arthur's family.

A novel about grief, the power of art, and the need to trust others, it is also about the slow, painful steps a family takes to heal after a death. No wonder Pearsall's central message is "Fear Not." As any person who has lost a loved one knows, the hardest part can be finding the courage to be happy again—and Arthur finally does that. The book can be paired with two other excellent middle grade novels about coping with death, *The Thing about Jellyfish* (Ali Benjamin, 2015), and *Counting by 7s* (Holly Sloan, 2013). Readers interested in texts that explore the power of art might also like *Under the Egg*, (Laura M. Fitzgerald, 2014) and *Half a Chance* (Cynthia Lord, 2014).

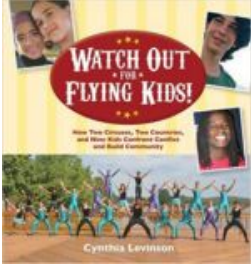
Shelley Pearsall was a middle school teacher before becoming the author of many acclaimed novels for young people. Her first novel, *Trouble Don't Last* (2003), won the Scott O'Dell Award for Historical Fiction. Pearsall explains that the art in *The Seventh Most Important Thing* is based on the work of American folk artist James Hampton, who collected junk from the street to build his "vision of heaven," a permanent exhibit at the Smithsonian American Art Museum. Although Pearsall imagined her story, the truth in the fiction makes *The Seventh Most Important Thing* all the more intriguing and a standout novel to share with young readers.

Ann Malaspina, Vermont College of Fine Arts.



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Book Review: Watch Out for Flying Kids!

Written by Cynthia Levinson

Peachtree, 2015, 216 pp.

ISBN 9781561458219

Circus is based on trust and overcoming fear and on making people laugh. Those are all in short supply in this part of the world. (p.23)

The search for understanding among cultures to resolve conflict is not a new endeavor and yet how this is approached has taken on new possibilities over time. Building a global community requires insight about the “other” and this insight is not always available nor are the opportunities for young people to interact with those of other cultures and nationalities. This book reflects the vision of change that began with individuals from St. Louis and Galilee, communities where diversity flourishes in different ways. Youth Social Circus, an arts education movement, is the venue that engaged these young people through the tumbling and gymnastic arts of the circus. The book focuses on nine young people from two countries who confront physical challenges, racism, animosity, and trust within a context that requires community and identity.

St. Louis is the home of Circus Harmony or “the Arches,” a group reflective of children who range from urban St. Louis to suburban families with greater life opportunities—children of different cultures. Young people from Galilee, both Palestinian and Israeli, live within an ongoing prejudicial and conflict-laden environment. This book focuses on the coming together of these two groups, each having overcome personal prejudice in transforming ways, as they extend their loyalty and trust to a global population far removed from their daily lives. Collaboration and community building is a necessity within the circus world where they perform. The hope of this movement is well expressed by Marc Rosenstein, a former leader of the Galilee Circus:

Circus will not bring peace to the Middle East. But it can help to make dialogue possible by reducing fears, lowering barriers, and building trust. It can provide a model of a shared loyalty that transcends ethnic identities. It can teach the art of taking risks for the common good. It can demonstrate, to a wide audience, that what appears to be impossible is indeed possible. None of these may be sufficient to bring about the requisite social change, but without them, no change is possible. (everydaycircus.net)

With stories of individuals who bring to life this experience for readers of all ages, Levinson has created an informational text that is a rich source of different perspectives highlighting the struggles that have existed for each of the groups across time. Each youth’s search for identity is evident in the autobiographical accounts of growing up and later performing. These young artists admit to their challenges of getting to know others and yet a strong sense of community and collaboration is evident in their own perceptions of the circus venue.

The author begins the book with a pronunciation guide to names of people and places that are the focus, signaling the importance of connecting name to identity. Side bars hold essential information about the young circus performers as well as about historic and cultural events that highlight the cultural experiences of these youth. Brightly colored photographs depict individuals as well as the circus in acts of tumbling, gymnastics, juggling, and other feats that reflect hours of practice and perfection of the circus arts.

Learning about this particular unique approach to a peaceful existence creates an inspiring and hopeful story. The information shared in context regarding the struggles within urban St. Louis and the ongoing challenges in Galilee make reading this book even more fulfilling. The reader finishes the book informed, hopeful, and inspired by the stories. Hope for peaceful change in society lies, perhaps, in the youth of today who are given opportunities to build relationships with others in their local communities as well as the larger global community.

This book would easily pair with other works by Levinson such as *We've Got a Job* (2015) since both look at children taking a stand and a developing their voice within society. The notion of creating unlikely friendships through experiences of trust, and both personal attitudes and professional performance, is found in this book as well as in *Sharing Our Homeland: Palestinian and Jewish Children at Summer Peace Camp* (Trish Marx, 2010). Media might also be employed using numerous YouTube clips and the Galilee Circus website. Other/ resources are easily located on the Internet and can be used to put into motion the focus of this book.

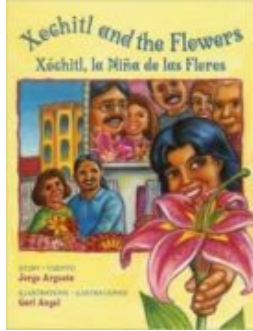
Cynthia Levinson wrote this book over a four year period that included traveling to Israel and the United States cities of St. Louis, Chicago, Saratoga, and Sarasota. She carried out 120 hours of interviews in three languages that involved two translators. Levinson relishes in nonfiction to include writing articles for magazines for youth as well as books. More information on Cynthia Levinson can be found at her website.

Janelle Mathis, University of North Texas



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Based on a work at <http://wowlit.org/on-line-publications/review/volume-viii1-2/>



Book Review: Xochitl and the Flowers/Xochitl, la niña de las flores

Written by Jose Argueta and Carl Angel

Children's Book Press, 2003, pp. 32

ISBN 9780892392247

Based in real-life happenings, Argueta has created a poignant story about a family's struggle to build a new life and roots in a new country. Xochitl (SOH-cheel) and her family attempt to make a new home for themselves in the United States after moving from El Salvador. In El Salvador, Xochitl's family had a small flower business and garden that they had to leave behind. In the U.S., Xochitl helps her mother make money by selling flowers in the neighborhood. Selling flowers provides the Flor family with the opportunity to meet and make friends with local storeowners and neighbors.

Mourning the garden they left behind, the Flor family are inspired to develop a garden in an empty lot by their apartment. Initially excited by the opportunity to open a neighborhood nursery, the family encounters opposition from the owner of the lot; however, neighbors come together in an effort to save the family's garden. From this experience they come to value new friendships and community in their adopted country.

The illustrations in *Xochitl* work as a counterpart to the text in the telling of the story. The illustrations are acrylic paintings that make use of bold colors, especially pinks and yellows. A distinctive feature is the use of several billboard-type pictures throughout the story that highlight Xochitl's state of mind at that moment.

If interested in addressing the garden aspect of the book, *Xochitl and the Flowers* could be paired with *Edible Schoolyard: A Universal Idea* (Alice Waters, 2008), which is about integrating academics with growing, cooking, and sharing wholesome foods. If pairing for the movement aspect of the story, books such as *Arto's Big Move* (Monica Arnaldo, 2014), *My Diary from Here to There: Mi diario de aqui hasta alla* (Amada Pérez, 2013), and *From There to Here* (Laurel Croza, 2014) could be used. In *My Diary from Here to There*, Amada overhears her parents talk of moving from Mexico to Los Angeles and records her fears, hopes, and dreams for their lives in the United States in her diary.

Argueta is an author of children's books, a poet, and a teacher. Born in El Salvador, he came to San Francisco in 1980, and published his first book in 1983. He is well known in San Francisco for his community work and takes part in the cultural life of the city teaching poetry in local schools and running a bookstore on Mission Street. Argueta has not forgotten his roots and works with humanitarian organizations to assist families and children in El Salvador. In 2010, Argueta became the director of "Talleres de Poesia" a literary organization that introduced the First Annual Children's Poetry Festival in El Salvador. Argueta's children's books are multicultural, several are bilingual and a number of them are written about foods from his home country and include recipes.

Argueta has received awards such as: Poet Laureate, San Francisco Public Library; Américas Award commended designation, 2003, for *Xochitl and the Flowers*, selected as one of the best children's bilingual books; winner of the Américas Award for Latin American literature and the independent publisher's book award for multicultural fiction for juveniles.

Carl Angel, who illustrated *Xochitl and the Flowers*, was born in Maryland, grew up on the island of Honolulu, and currently lives in Northern California. He is a visual artist experienced in narrative illustration, children's books, book design and graphic design. When illustrating for a book, he chooses to work closely with the author and editor in order to get the pictures just right for each story. Getting the pictures just right is important to Angel as he has stated that he has made a practice of working "primarily with multicultural publishers in bringing the stories of underrepresented communities to life." Representing these narratives authentically is of importance to Angel.

More information about Jorge Argueta can be found at his homepage or at The University of California, Santa Cruz, Latino Literary Cultures Project website.

Megan McCaffrey, Governors State University



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Based on a work at <http://wowlit.org/on-line-publications/review/volume-viii1-2/>



Book Review: A Year Without Mom

Written and illustrated by Dasha Tolstikova
House of Anansi/Groundwood, 2015, 176 pp.
ISBN: 9781554986927

Twelve-year-old Dasha lives in Moscow and discovers that she is on the precipice of a year of many changes. Dasha's father is already in the U.S., and now her mother wants to go there to study advertising at an American university. Dasha is told she will spend a year with her grandmother and grandfather. She loves her grandparents, but it is difficult to stay the whole year without her mother.

Her grandmother is a writer, and Dasha goes with her to the summer writers' retreat outside of the city. They are there in August 1991 when the coup d'état attempted to dismiss Gorbachev occurred. After the Christmas holiday in Germany with her grandmother, Dasha's regular routine resumes. But life is terrible as only a young adolescent's life can be – her school is boring, the love of her life is in love with another girl, and it is a dark and cold time of the year. There is an answer to all these troubles—she wants to go to a different school, the one Petya, the love of her life, attends. But it does not work out; Dasha does not pass the exam. With the first spring rays of sun, Dasha's life changes for the better when her mother returns, but now there is a new plan—they both will go to America. Dasha is sad to leave all her friends behind and says she will not go, but it is the adults who decide and so her new life in Urbana, Illinois is about to begin.

The book is accurate historically, and gives a true portrait of Russia and the turmoil of that time. The Russian political events of the early 1990s are the perfect background for Dasha's story. Everything in the country changed with enormous speed: politics, economics, cultural opportunities, and possibilities for travel beyond the borders of the Soviet Union. A lot of these changes are seen in the book through the Dasha's eyes. At the same time, it is a girl's story, and Dasha's life is not that different from the lives of many other girls in the world. Dasha goes to school and to evening art classes, meets with her girlfriends, and falls in love with a boy whom she meets during the summer vacation. She also reads about America and watches American movies—she loves watching *Gone with the Wind*—because she wants to imagine the place where her mother lives. For Christmas, her mother sends her a wonderful present—a huge book with all the Beatles songs!

To gain insight into other ways of life told graphically, this book may be paired with *The Other Side of the Wall* (Simon Schwartz, 2015) or *Chinese-Born American* (Gene Luen Yang, 2013) even though this book addresses a younger reader. While Dasha loses her mother for only one year, additional pairings that would address loss of one's parents could include *Under the Mesquite* (Guadalupe Garcia McCall, 2011) or *Moon over Manifest* (Clare Vanderpool, 2010).

Dasha Tolstikova is both the author and illustrator of this book. This is her first book as a writer. Her black, white, and red illustrations are simple, but compelling, and they work effectively

with the text. She adds just enough Russian letters and words into her pictures that a reader can get some taste of the Russian language. She also skillfully uses some elements of a graphic novel. More of her art may be found at her website.

Olga Bukhina, International Association for the Humanities, New York City



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