

Exploring Global Books Critically in the Classroom During a Pandemic

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This project utilized reflective and inquiry-based work with K-4 educators for the 2020-2021 year at a Title I school with a high population of multilingual learners. We extended the work that we started the previous year (<https://wowlit.org/on-line-publications/stories/volume-viii-issue-2/4/>) that was supported by a Worlds of Words grant. A select group of teachers representing each grade level at J.E. Moss Elementary School, as well as a librarian joined me (Jeanne) in regular professional development group meetings after school. We met on Zoom to explore the critical use of global literature in the classroom in educator planning sessions.

The purpose of this professional development included an intentional focus to create space to facilitate critical discussions of global and dual language literature and to strengthen teaching practices. Teachers have been grappling with the institutional standards that focus on teaching to the test through a scripted language arts curriculum, finding ways to insert global books not currently on the list for the Language Arts Block, and dealing with an emphasis on teaching text evidence in the language arts curriculum.

Our project co-constructed equitable and critical teaching approaches to engage all learners as they used global books and literacy strategies to think critically about illustration and text. We extended our learning with visual analysis, especially with online platforms due to COVID-19. Teachers tried out their use of literacy strategies both online and, at times, in person with their students in a supportive environment. Our reflective and inquiry-based discussions supported teachers in considering how to adopt these literacy strategies for all types of learners as a means of encouraging students to think critically and enjoy learning about global literature, while making connections to their lives. Vertical work included thinking about teaching with literature across grade levels as we collaboratively problem solved our approaches from our various perspectives as teachers.

We piloted some of these approaches in a small group setting with three text sets that were supported by our grant and increased our after-school sessions. We engaged in the selection of books to be used for this project. This project allowed teachers to think reflectively and collaboratively and enhanced their strategies to use global books in the classroom. J.E. Moss Elementary is a Title I School in Antioch, Tennessee, with a high population of bilingual learners, including those whose native languages are Arabic and Spanish.

The team began by reading the books in a text set. Each participant carefully read each book and used post-its to take note of interesting features of the text and illustrations. We read deeply within a critical frame and explored the cultural contexts of the books. This method of reading and discussing books differs from how teachers have prepared to teach books in the past, allowing teachers more time as a team to explore books without immediately thinking about how to use them in their classrooms. Then, in several follow-up discussions with the text set, the group formed their own stances about a book.

Title of Book	Summary
<i>Outside, Inside</i> (Pham, 2021)	A thought-provoking story that carefully tells the story of members of a community coming together while grappling with the challenges of a pandemic.
<i>Journey</i> (Sanna, 2016)	This books powerfully relates the story of a family leaving their home due to war. The illustrations are vividly graphic in conveying the challenges of finding a new place to live.
<i>Tomorrow</i> (Kaadan, 2018)	Yazan is not permitted to go outside and play due to the perils of war. Set in the Middle East.
<i>Sulwe</i> (Nyong'o, 2019)	Sulwe has beautiful skin that's the color of midnight and she tries to find the space to fit in with her Kenyan family. She learns to see the beauty her skin.
<i>Lubna and the Pebble</i> (Meddour, 2019)	Lubna's best friend is a pebble and she ultimately shares the pebble with a little boy, who struggles with living in a tent as a Syrian refugee.
<i>Story Boat</i> (Maclear, 2020)	A lyrical story about the migrant experience that is told through the powerful lens of a child in the Middle East.
<i>Bilal Cooks Daal</i> (Saeed, 2019)	Bilal learns to make his favorite food, daal, a slow-cooked lentil dish from South Asia. The cooking of the daal becomes part of a community celebration.

Table 1. Overview of Global Literature Used in this Project.

Our research question was: What does teaching look like as teachers engage students in analyzing the illustrations and text in global literature (picturebooks), both online and in person? We took notes, documented our thinking about the books on post-its, and recorded our thinking in teacher reflection journals. Each teacher brought evidence of student thinking as documented online and from their learning journals to our regular meetings. Teachers used their reflection journals to document how they used the literacy strategies with students in their classrooms. We collected this evidence from the journals of students and teachers as part of our analysis of teaching practice shared at our group meetings. We analyzed students' use of strategies as readers and writers in our discussions. In this vignette, each teacher shares her story of how this professional development work looked in classroom settings.

Molly Miller: Predicting and Exploring the Pandemic through *Outside, Inside*

In a time when children need some excitement and a reason to read, I feel so lucky to be given the chance to use diverse global books in the classroom. My class consisted primarily of students coming to school knowing multiple languages and learning English as a second language, which gives them a unique perspective on the world. When they read, they see it through the lens of an immigrant or a child who is learning a new language and culture—and the beauty of this lens is the diverse ideas and values they bring. I have never read a book the same way twice because of the thoughts students continually bring to the table.

Figure 1: Class Demographics



Figure 1. Demographics.

With global books, I worked to recalibrate their ideas that learning is not strenuous and is boring. I aimed to show them that reading can be an adventure and that they can learn and increase their knowledge and skills in new and exciting ways. One way we engaged with literature was to make close personal connections to a book and discuss how we can shape the future. In a world that often seems to value correctness over creativity, I aimed to show students that their experiences matter and that what matters is how they see the world and share their experiences.

In the second-grade class, we talked about biographies and history, focusing on the past and how knowing about the past and others' experiences can help us in the present. And then, we talked about how we are someday going to be a part of history! In the year 2021, we are making history. "How?" the kids wondered. Well, let's read to find out! I showed them the book *Outside, Inside* by LeUyen Pham. I explained how this book is about right now, not about history yet, but it will be. We looked at the cover and tried to predict what the book was about. I looped with these children, so we have a good rapport and they trust me with their ideas. Our predictions ranged far and wide—in the eyes of seven- and eight-year-olds, this book could have been about anything based on the title and cover alone! Then, we began to read.

Before I opened the pages of the book to students, I read it and poured over the words and illustrations. *Outside, Inside* is a story of the world reacting to the COVID-19 pandemic—the shutdowns, emotions, separation, and changes that everyone faced. I attended an author talk via Zoom with LeUyen Pham where she described the process of writing the book, how she used the stories and images on the news to form her illustrations. She shared fun facts about the writing and her perspective on the pandemic and how it impacted her and her family. Armed with my

tidbits from the author's talk and some key ideas from the book that I thought would resonate with students, I started to show students the story. I worried that I had not prepared them quite enough to build their knowledge. I didn't know if students would figure out what the story was about or if they would understand enough of the words. I decided, though, to lean into their own experience and hoped they would make connections as we read.



COVID-19: A KID'S PERSPECTIVE

How did second graders in Nashville experience the Covid-19 shutdowns?

WHAT I EXPECTED

I had the unique opportunity to loop with my group of students from last year to this year, so I knew a bit about their experiences during the school closures and the needs their families had during that time - but that was my perception of their experiences. After reading, I loved seeing their take on the pandemic and lockdowns.

EXPERIENCE #1

 Some of the students detailed their experiences in a way that was similar to what I'd felt - loneliness and a worry that the pandemic may never end. They couldn't see their friends, they couldn't go anywhere. Their families struggled financially because the parents couldn't work. This experience was what I'd guessed I would hear from the students.

EXPERIENCE #2

 Surprisingly, some of the students described actually enjoying the lockdown! They described cherishing time with family that they typically wouldn't have. Some of them learned new hobbies - one student was very proud of how good he got at playing video games. I didn't expect that they would find so many ways to see joy during lockdown!

EXPERIENCE #3

 Many of the students shared that their lockdown experiences were filled with a lot of emotions that they didn't like to experience. They took on the stress of their parents' unemployment and the high responsibility of being caretakers for younger siblings. They carried these stresses and worries back to school, too, and were trying to learn through these big emotions.

EXPERIENCES SHAPE THE FUTURE

 I used my expectations to predict what I thought the students would share. But their vast experiences, the lives they live, are often even more interesting than I'd ever imagine. Allowing them to express their voice, name their experiences, and really connect to the book and see the value of their own perspective.

Figure 2. COVID-19 A Child's Perspective.

The first question I always ask when we read is “What do you notice?” I want children to take their time, to look at the pictures and notice the nuances. I want them to see how the words align with the images. I want them to see something I have not seen. They are very good at this. On the first pages, they noticed that the images were of the same street, but that the colors changed from bright and busy to dim and lonely. Everyone went inside, and they wanted to know why. I started by saying that this story was about them but they didn’t yet make the connection. They noticed different things about the pictures and started forming more opinions about the book, its meaning and message, and how it related to us. Then, we turned a page and read about the people who continued to work while everyone was inside—the essential workers who kept serving and healing and protecting. Then, something clicked. One child, then another, then another looked at the pictures and noticed people wearing masks. “Oh,” one said, “it’s about COVID!” “How do you know?” another asked. Then, a ripple of connections occurred as students commented on how they had to stay in their houses. Some said they felt the way the pictures looked—gloomy and worried. They knew we had to wear masks and discussed who was allowed to be out and about and how that’s changed over time. They noticed similarities between the world they had been living in for a year and the world found inside the pages of the book.

We continued through the book, making connections, talking about our big emotions and what we had to do during shutdowns and quarantines. When we got to the end of the book, they became frustrated. The ending, they said, is fake. The rest of the story aligned with their reality, but the ending was happier than we were—the characters did not have masks and could play with their friends. A slow rage began to build in the classroom until one child said, “Well, we are getting better and we’ll be that way sometime!” She noticed that the book ended in a cheerful way and that our reality won’t remain gloomy forever. Then we thought about how we can let the world know what it’s like. I told the children about the author talk, how the author wanted to share her story of what happened during COVID and what she saw on the news. “This is what it was like for the author,” I said, “How can we show what it was like for second graders in Tennessee?” “Let’s write about it!” they cheerfully decided.

We talked about the importance of writing down what’s happening so that people in the future can read about how the pandemic impacted people. And we talked about how their stories are important. They are important, they matter, their words and ideas have value, and they are part of a global picture that is much bigger than themselves. Using books about a time we all may rather skip over, students felt empowered to speak, write, share their story with the world, and see their value as readers and writers.

Denise Lancaster, Kahla Smith, and Melissa Williams: Building Knowledge and Making Connections

Last year, Kahla Smith and Denise Lancaster learned that we needed to continually find strategic ways to build upon the knowledge of all students while reading books in the classroom. Upon reading *The Journey* by Francesca Sanna, first-grade students demonstrated many comprehension strategies as readers and were able to analyze the illustrations with great competence, while fourth-grade students seemed to let personal experiences interfere with comprehension. Last year, we were concerned by this and worried that we might be overusing connection strategies.

This year, with the assistance of our librarian, Melissa Williams, we focused on *Outside, Inside* by LeUyen Pham, *Tomorrow* by Nadine Kaadan, *Sulwe* by Lupita Nyong'O, and *Lubna and Pebble* by Wendy Meddour. We observed that knowledge is critical in how we talk about a book and can shape how students interpret and analyze images and text. We observed that the order of the books we read and what students were learning currently influenced how they reacted and thought about new books.

Kahla found student responses particularly enlightening, “Students surprised me and challenged me to really think more about the books that I selected to read to my class. Being a mostly math and social studies teacher this year, I didn’t get many opportunities to read for enjoyment with my classes. We read mainly historical-based books. The students and I both enjoyed the days that we spent focused on reading global literacy books.”

Melissa was new to this project and became fascinated by the observations, expectations and thoughts of students and the idea that so much can vary depending on how a topic is introduced or the previous experiences of students. She found herself intrigued during the discussions with her co-workers on some of the differences in the responses on the level of analysis from their students, perhaps due to the difference in approaches. As a librarian, she often reads through the book with her patrons/ students and then holds a discussion afterward, sometimes including preliminary thoughts before rather than stopping throughout the book to discuss or using the book as a jumping off point for a discussion on a given topic. As the school librarian, she interacts with all of the students in the school, but her schedule can vary. Due to the adjustable nature of her schedule, the students she is with often change and may be limited in time frame, but she usually gets a chance to explore topics and books with multiple classes.

The first book we explored is *Outside, Inside* by LeUyen Pham. In Kahla’s afternoon class, students’ predictions were literal, mostly stating their observations of the cover. Until about halfway through the book, their comments and observations remained literal with some students stuck on the idea that everyone in the story was going inside due to an impending natural disaster or weather-related incident. They were halfway through the book before the first student mentioned that the story might be about the coronavirus. They noticed an empty playground, similar to the school’s playground, and how everyone was distanced. While a few students agreed with this idea, many maintained that the situation was storm or weather related. It is important to note that our area had recently experienced a particularly bad storm and we feel that this experience impacted their interpretation of the book.

Kahla’s morning class read the book *Tomorrow* first, which we suspect altered their predictions. Students predicted someone can appear one way on the outside and feel another way on the inside. These connections may have been influenced by the fairy tale unit they had recently studied in their ELA class around the idea that beauty is only skin deep. We were about a third of the way through the book, when one student finally mentioned the coronavirus. They noticed that people were now wearing masks and that detail in the illustrations helped students make their first connection. By the end of the book, most students made the connection to a virus of some sort, maybe not necessarily coronavirus, while only one student still thought it was because people were doing bad things outside.

When Melissa read *Outside, Inside* with students in the library, she read through the book completely and then students went back and looked at the illustrations during their discussion. She knew many teachers at our school were excited about *Outside, Inside*, as it was one of the first picturebooks to come out about COVID-19. Since students had firsthand knowledge of this event, she couldn't wait to hear their thoughts. After reading, she asked, "Why was everyone inside?" Pretty consistently, in the three classes she read this book with, the first answers included normal reasons why people would go inside—it was raining, snowing, or it was winter. Even when someone mentioned COVID-19 as a reason, others disagreed.

Then students studied the illustrations carefully. They noticed there wasn't any snow on the ground. Most pictures of the outside were sunny, so they looked for what other hints the pictures provided. Since some of the images are very small and all of the students were spread out for social distancing, it took a moment, but eventually, they noticed the masks that many people were wearing. It was then that they realized the book was about COVID-19. Since children all had recent experiences with the pandemic, it was surprising that the children needed that much prompting to consider COVID-19. At this point, Melissa had students follow up by talking about how we are now firsthand observers and primary sources of COVID-19. She encouraged students to write or draw about their experiences with COVID-19 and share if they felt inclined.

In Denise's first group, students used the front cover to make predictions. One student predicted it was about love because of the picture. Other students tried to use the title to make predictions about why someone would be inside. Students could sense that something bad was happening. Denise's second group of readers immediately thought it might be about COVID, while another group did not make this prediction until the page with everyone wearing a mask. Both groups of students focused on the cat in the story and assumed that it played some type of significant role. Kahla's group noticed the cat and thought it might be the narrator. According to the author/illustrator, the cat didn't play a huge role in the story.

Students in Denise's class first noticed that the books were about the quarantine.	Students in Melissa's class questioned if everyone was inside because of weather and wondered what was the point of the hospital.	Students in Kahla's class noticed someone wearing a mask and started looking for clues to connect the books to the coronavirus.
	Both groups that worked with Denise consistently looked for a page that confirmed that the story was about Covid-19 or the quarantine.	

Table 2. Comparing Observations in *Outside, Inside* Across Classrooms

After reading the author's note, the children had great discussion about how something so recent, that we are still living through, can be turned into a story for people to read in the future. Students were actually shocked that something so recent was already in a book. Many cited this as a reason for not predicting coronavirus as the topic of the story. We talked quite a bit about primary sources and how at this time in their life, they are living what will become history.

Denise shared *Tomorrow* with her two groups. One group she has read numerous books about the struggles of war and immigration as central topics. The other group she had not been able to work with as much so they did not have the same experiences. In both readings of *Tomorrow*, at least one student used the illustrations to predict, and others agreed, of the possibility that what was “changing” was possibly the Twin Towers disaster. The multilingual learners in the group that had read numerous books on topics of war and immigration quickly predicted that war was what caused the “changing.” The other group of readers made unusual predictions about what had changed.

Denise thought that because of their experiences with COVID, students might connect to the characters’ experience of not being able to go to school or to go out and see friends. She thought they surely would make that prediction early in the reading, but neither group did.

Melissa had the opportunity to read *Sulwe* with four different third-grade classes and two second-grade classes. Each time, they began by discussing the cover of the book and what it might indicate the story was about. In every discussion, students focused on it as a story about space. Seeing the cover background is a starscape, this is not terribly surprising. What Melissa found interesting was their unwillingness to release the idea of space travel. When she asked about what they thought *Sulwe* was doing, they said she was a scary or angry space baby, and there was guessing about what horrible things were happening to her in space. Her hand reaching out was explained as a grabbing action, instead of innocent, even though the roundness of her face and eyes convinced them she was much younger than the character is in the story.

Looking back, Melissa wishes she had talked about night and how it can make us feel before reading the book to see how that framing may have changed their perspective. Discussions after the book focused on the importance of liking yourself and the lessons *Sulwe* learns from the mythology story about day and night. The next time Melissa uses this book, rather than have them discuss the cover as an introduction, she will have them describe day and night and see how their interpretations of those words and ideas influence how they see the book.

Alex Hammond: Discussing Students’ Thinking about *Story Boat*

Story Boat (Maclear, 2020) stuck out to me from the beginning because of the bright colors used in the illustrations. The cover has many interesting details that make you wonder and start thinking before even opening the book. I enjoy stories with bright colors that provide many chances for your imagination to wander. I love that the book has so many details to notice. I read it multiple times and each time I read it, I noticed something else. I especially enjoy sharing stories like this one with students because they always notice things that I did not see initially.

I chose to read this book with two different classes. My goal was to read the book without context for students. I wanted to truly see where their minds took them and allow them to explore all options. I did not want to give them any stepping stones as I was curious how they would approach this book, especially after a year of quarantine and difficult events. I started by telling them we were going to read a book for fun. They were excited immediately. I had a couple of open-ended questions planned throughout the book, mostly questions about the book’s events.

Both classes of fourth-grade students were multilingual learners, but they approached the book in different ways. Each class responded with completely different ideas. One class was very literal and said that the boy was writing a story and everything he wrote then came to life. They did not see that the boy was using his imagination. What they saw on the page is what they believed was happening. Most students thought that he was dreaming and that explained how he was flying and using the cup as a boat. Some said that the cup was his new home and the family found it and live there now. They did not think about the details or wonder how things were possible.

The other class realized the boy was using his imagination as he traveled somewhere. They thought more about what might be happening. This class realized the family was carrying things with them as they traveled so they concluded that the family was immigrating somewhere. They realized the book was a combination of literal (they were traveling somewhere) and imagination (he was imagining himself flying/living in a cup). One student realized they were immigrants going somewhere and the rest of the class agreed and fed off of that. They listened to each other's ideas and explored that student's idea. Some students threw out other ideas but they usually circled back to the first student's idea and this contributed to how each class responded to the story. Their interpretations show how the students can build off each other's viewpoints. Giving them the opportunity to just explore a book can lead to so many new and different ideas. I'm always impressed by the details that students think about on when I provide space for open discussion.

Literal Interpretations	Imaginative Interpretations
Living in tents now	Everything the character draws becomes real
Traveling to visit someone new	Constellation is telling the story
Going on a nature walk	Character is using the pencil as an oar to steer the cup boat
Character is dreaming about everything	Character is imagining things as they travel
Character is actually living in a cup now	Character is drawing the story as it unfolds
Going on a vacation	Using everything the find to make a boat

Table 3. Literal and Imaginative Interpretations.

Students come to school with so many different backgrounds and experiences. Their home cultures and the things they have experienced changed the way they approach the same book. Very rarely do we allow students opportunities to just read and explore new ideas without guidance from us. I enjoy reading global literature with students and hearing more about their lives. These books gave them so many opportunities to connect the story to their own lives. I noticed students get so excited to read about different cultures and families. They truly enjoy learning when they have engaging literature from a global perspective.

Elizabeth Weisenfelder: Grappling with Read-Alouds of Global Books in a Pandemic

One of the most beloved traditions altered by the pandemic is the read aloud. Virtually, the read aloud was nearly impossible. Laptop camera quality made it difficult for students to engage with illustrations in meaningful ways. Additionally, the virtual setting did not lend itself to rich analysis of text and illustrations, nor did it allow for students to engage in the types of discussions we typically had when exploring a book.

Though returning to in-person learning certainly helped solve many of these problems, there were still a few barriers. Typically, students gather on the carpet when it's time to read a story. However, because of social distancing measures, this practice was not possible. This may not seem like much of an obstacle, but it is very difficult for third graders to focus for an extended amount of time while sitting at a desk, separated from their peers. The carpet is a space where engagement is high, since I am sitting near students, which makes seeing the illustrations and engaging in conversations much easier. If I have learned anything this year, though, it is that children are adaptable. Even at their desks, spread apart from one another, students were able to have deep, analytical discussions regarding text and illustrations.

My class explored various global books this year: *Bilal Cooks Daal* by Aisha Saeed, *Lubna and Pebble* by Wendy Meddour, and *Sulwe* by Lupita Nyong'o to name a few. However, of all the read alouds the class explored this year, *Outside, Inside* by LeUyen Pham was the book that students connected with the most. Though this book doesn't fit the traditional definition of global literature, I believe that it is a global because it illustrates how everyone throughout the world has been impacted by COVID-19. Everyone, in every corner of the world, has been touched by the pandemic in one way or another, so in my opinion, it is very much a global book.

In the planning stages of a read aloud, I typically go through and develop questions based off the illustrations and text. I consider what I want students to take away from the book and how I can help guide them to those understandings. However, for this book, I didn't do any of these things. *Outside, Inside* is an account of how the world changes because of the COVID-19, without mentioning the words "virus" or "pandemic." I wanted to see how long it took students to pick up on the topic of the book, so I didn't want to do much prompting. Students were already well-aware of the pandemic—they'd been living through it for more than a year.

I wanted to use this book to encourage students to reflect on the changes they'd experienced in the past year. I wanted to create a space where students felt safe to share the challenges they have faced. Though our classroom reflects the changes created by the pandemic, we rarely discuss it. Ultimately, I wanted to use this read aloud to help students share their experiences, so I didn't want them to be hemmed in by pre-planned questions and goals. I started the read aloud by asking students what they noticed about the cover and what they thought the book might be about, taking into consideration the title. Many noticed the hearts hanging from the window and predicted the story might be about Valentine's Day. They also noticed a little girl and cat looking out the window and predicted that maybe they had to stay inside for some reason. I asked them to think about a time they had to stay inside and many spoke about weather that prevented them from going outside. The cover and title alone were not enough for students to predict that this book was about the pandemic.

On the first page of the story, students noticed a busy street, full of people doing daily tasks like walking dogs, driving, and playing. Students also noticed the cat that was featured on the cover of the book as well as the little girl who was inside the cover. The next page shows the same street, but as students noticed, it is now completely empty, except for the cat. The cat became a landmark as we continued the story. Students felt that because the cat continued to show up, it would be of some


significance. At this point, I asked students why they thought everyone went inside. Students predicted that it might be cold outside or that bad weather was coming. Still, there was no mention of coronavirus.

The next page shows that everyone, everywhere, all over the world went inside. On this page, students made the connection that something had to be happening everywhere in the world, so it probably wasn't a weather event. On this page, students still noticed the cat, and one student wondered if the cat was the narrator of the story since it had appeared on all of the pages. The next page shows people all over the world behind windows, much like the little girl on the cover, except this time, we can see their faces. At this point, some students began to make the connection that this story might be about the pandemic. "We had to stay inside because of coronavirus," one student said. Some students weren't sold on this idea, though. They couldn't believe that there was already a book about something that was still happening. It wasn't until the next page that students were in agreement that this book was about the pandemic, because the illustration shows people who couldn't stay inside—firefighters, paramedics, store owners, garbage truck drivers, police officers, and mailmen. Students noticed that everyone on this page was wearing a mask, which is how they knew that this story had to be about the pandemic.

Students connected with the page that showed what life was like inside, especially the illustration of online school. "Hey, that's how we learned at the beginning of the year," remarked one student. Students really connected with this page because it shows various activities that they took part in during the pandemic. This encouraged them to share their experiences, which was one of my goals for this read aloud. Students talked about spending time with their families, reading books, watching TV, and playing video games.


STUDENT EXPERIENCES DURING COVID-19

After reading "Outside, Inside" by LeUyen Pham, I asked my students to consider how their lives were changed by the pandemic. Students drew pictures of things they did during quarantine and wrote about how their worlds changed. These are some of their responses.



BORED, BORED, BORED

Many students mentioned the excessive amount of TV they watched during quarantine. One student wrote, "I was bored of watching TV."



Family Time

A common thread throughout student work was the increased family time students experienced due to quarantine. One student drew a map of their house and showed each family member doing different things—sleeping, eating, cooking, watching TV, and playing video games.

COMMON OBJECTS

Lots of students illustrated objects that represented their time in quarantine. These objects included masks, computers, TVs, books, drawing supplies, and video games.



SCHOOL GOES VIRTUAL

Many students also illustrated and wrote about the ups and downs of virtual school. One student drew a picture of herself at her work station, in front of her laptop. On the other side of the paper, she drew herself asleep and wrote, "After class, I take a nap."





CHANGING CELEBRATIONS

One student wrote about her older sister's birthday during quarantine. She used dialogue to illustrate the conversation her parents had with her sister. She wrote, "We are sorry that we couldn't invite anyone to your party, since Covid-19 isn't safe and we don't want anyone to get sick, but at least you have us. We are so happy we're not sick and are healthy and can be with you for your birthday"

DOCUMENTING THE PANDEMIC

One student made a timeline of events, as he remembered them. The events included on his timeline were, "warning of Covid-19, first stimulus checks, importance of wearing mask, and social distancing guidelines". He also illustrated the logo for the local news station, where he got this information.



Figure 3. Student Experiences During COVID-19.

Toward the end of the book, there is a page that talks about how staying inside during the pandemic was the right thing to do. The illustrations on this page show some people in full-color, but also people who have a grayish blue tinge. Students predicted that the grayish blue people had died from the coronavirus, since this color represents sadness and depression. This page invited students to share about losses that they'd suffered during the pandemic, which is something we haven't talked much about as a class. Though these conversations were not easy, I could tell students were relieved to have a space to discuss these heavy topics and connect with one another. The pandemic has changed so much about their lives and it's something that we, unfortunately, do not acknowledge in school very often. In returning to in-person learning, there is a temptation to pretend things are back to normal, even though COVID procedures reject that notion. This read aloud allowed us to step back and recognize that things are not normal and discuss that we are all living through a historic time—a time that none of us have ever lived through. We discussed that one day we will recount the time of the pandemic to those who did not live through it, so we are the ones responsible for writing down what happened.

In my mind, what made this read aloud so successful is that students were able to make very personal connections to the story. The multilingual students felt empowered and confident to share their experiences because they brought with them a wealth of knowledge and personal experiences. Sometimes multilingual learners can be hesitant to share during whole group, not because they don't have anything to share, but because they feel nervous to use English in front of their peers, especially if the content is new or unfamiliar. I feel like *Outside, Inside* helped to lower the affective filter of multilingual learners because they were able to use their personal experiences to connect with the book. This was not information they just learned about, it was not new or unfamiliar topics, we were discussing topics that represented their lived experience, which made the book powerful and relevant to all students, something that transcended language barriers. Students were able to use their knowledge and experiences to make connections to the book, but most importantly, they were able to make connections to each other.

Kathryn Hall: Finding Commonality through Food and Global Literature

Food is at the very heart of cultures. It connects and it exposes us. It has the power to unite us with one another in our differences. This year, several powerful pieces of global literature brought joy and connection to a classroom of twenty second-grade English learners from seven different countries and four different continents. For two students, who had entered a U.S. classroom for the first time, there were many uncertainties and unknowns. They were hearing a new language, being exposed to new academics, and experiencing new foods. In a pandemic year filled with fear and uncertainty around every corner, we longed for connection with each other. Personal experiences and family connect us with one another and open up conversation when we are able to talk about our experiences. For students, food is a symbol of celebration with personal ties to their cultures and families.

With two of our global literature books, I created a unit specifically looking at different cultures and the foods that are important to them. *Bilal Cooks Daal* by Aisha Saeed focuses on a slow-cooked dish,

daal, that is commonly cooked in South Asia. Bilal is excited to make this dish with and for his friends, but he is also nervous. Will they like it? We were able to talk about how often the foods that are important to our family and culture can feel like a part of us. Several students who are of Asian heritage were able to connect with some of the cultural elements of Bilal's family. Students expressed how they have shared those same nerves that Bilal experienced when sharing an important meal or dish with friends who had never tried it before. This led into important conversations about different foods that are important to our families and how they connect with our culture. After reading the book, I asked students "What is a special food or recipe that your family makes?" Students used the "Read, Sketch, and Stretch" strategy to draw a picture of a special recipe. They then proceeded to label the image and write several sentences. When we shared, it was incredibly special to hear the variety of different dishes and cultures represented within our classroom. We were then also able to look up and learn more about the names of the dishes as many were in a different language. The historical element of food is what makes it culturally significant. With this in mind, we spent time researching the history behind several dishes to discover the reason why they exist.

Freedom Soup (Charles, 2019) is a celebratory book that follows a Haitian family making a traditional New Year's Soup. Students learned about Haitian Independence as they read and learned how food can be reflective of important moments in a culture's history. After reading the book, I asked students, "How is food important to your family?" Students responded in writing in the form of a letter to their teacher.

During our share, students were able to share specific holidays or celebrations for which their family prepares special meals. Some shared religious holidays while others shared important independence days. Many students also brought up how important food has been to their family during the pandemic. Some students had spent time at home learning from a mother or grandmother how to make some of their favorite cultural dishes. Because of COVID, we were not able to bring different foods into the classroom to share with one another. However, using these books in the future, I would love to invite families to make a dish or recipe together that can then be sent in to share with the classroom. These global books were unifying for our class as we were able to connect over foods that were important and unique to our families.

Concluding Thoughts from J.E. Moss Global Community

We also plan to further explore the role that life experiences play with making connections to a book. We want to effectively introduce concepts while expanding student thinking. In order to experiment with this idea next year, we intend to read the titles in differing orders, and vary reading styles (reading the book all the way through without talking or questioning and talking during the read aloud) observe how that introduction of knowledge impacts responses. We want to explore how to encourage our focus on using global literature strategically with students.

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