

HAPPY PIG DAY!

FOLLOWING FIRST-GRADERS INTO THE STORY WORLD OF MO WILLEMS

Colleen Gilrhane and Maggie Lingle Lohr

As our children read, wrote, interacted, and responded to storybook read-alouds, we noticed throughout the beginning months of first grade that:

- books authored by Mo Willems were selected most frequently for self-selected independent reading;
- the Pigeon, and Piggie and Gerald, were frequent characters in the children's writing;
- the children engaged in "expressive, performative engagement" (Sipe, 2002) using the voices and gestures of these characters as they rehearsed, wrote, and responded to their own and each other's stories, or when they joyfully read aloud from Willems' books.

By early December, when Christina walked in one morning with information she'd found on the internet the night before about how to send mail to Mo Willems, and the entire class wanted to write to him, we knew we needed to join them in the secondary world (Benton, 1992) Willems had "created with words and visual images" (Sipe, 2002, p. 477). Our goal was to celebrate the children's love for this literature and open up more possibilities for them to use it in the context of our classroom. After describing the contexts of Mo Willems' books and of the occasions for responding to them in the classroom, we zoom in to share the ways the story world was engaged in two different settings: a particular day of celebration, and the ongoing experience of the writers' workshop.

Contexts

The World of Mo Willems

The children in our class loved three different series written and illustrated by Willems: the Pigeon books, the Gerald and Piggie books, and the Knuffle Bunny books. In each series, Willems manipulates the front and back endpapers with the back endpapers differing slightly from those in the front. Once the children are tuned in to them—there is much anticipation, enjoyment, and discussion.

The Pigeon. The Pigeon is impulsive and egocentric and prone to temper tantrums when he cannot have what he wants. Asked in an interview about this character, Willems responded, "He's the Pigeon. The fact is his first name is 'The.' That should tell you enough about who he is and where he thinks his place in the world is" (Willems, 2013). In each book, he feels mistreated because there is something he wants to do (drive the bus, stay up late) that he cannot; after expressing his rage and frustration, he feels sheepish when he realizes he was not being picked on after all.

These illustrations require readers to attend carefully to the actions of the Pigeon and the expressions on his face. Willems employs speech and thought bubbles which make it easy for readers to know who is speaking. The endpapers differ slightly at the end of the book from those at the beginning, e.g., the endpapers are covered with hot dogs in *The Pigeon Finds a Hot Dog!* (Willems, 2004b), and at the end one of them is half eaten.

Gerald and Piggie. Best friends Piggie and Elephant Gerald star in a series of longer, more complex books that deal with issues of importance to young children: friendship, fairness, belonging, and feelings. In response to an interviewer's statement that these characters are well-adjusted and good at working out problems, Willems replied

I would say the complete opposite. For the Elephant, Gerald, the cup is half full of poison. And Piggie, she's a joyful soul, but she could quite easily walk into a wall and not realize it. I think that they're like any working set of friendships or relationships, they need each other because they supply for the other elements that they don't have. What they are willing to do is to admit their mistakes and admit how much they care for each other. And that is perhaps rare, unfortunately. But, no, they're very poorly adjusted.

(Willems, 2013)

Expressive drawings and thought/speech bubbles support readers in these books, with the added benefit of color-coding the speech bubbles to help keep track of who's talking: pink for Piggie, and gray for Gerald, to match their bodies. The endpapers also relate to the story, with a slight twist at the end, and have the added meme of an appearance by the Pigeon that children learn to look for.

Knuffle Bunny. Willems, his wife, their daughter, Trixie, and Trixie's stuffed toy, Knuffle Bunny, are the main characters in these three books that span a period of several years of Trixie's childhood. As Knuffle Bunny is left at the laundromat (Willems, 2004a), mixed up with another bunny (Willems, 2007), and left off of the airplane on an international trip (Willems, 2010a), the family must find solutions. Readers watch Trixie grow up and her parents change their appearances over time.

The backgrounds in the Knuffle Bunny books are black and white photography, with drawn-in-color characters overlaid. Conventional narration and conversation are used instead of speech bubbles, although the story-related endpapers remain as in the other two series.

The World of First Grade

The events we share here occurred in Maggie's first-grade classroom at a rural/suburban school in Tennessee serving fewer than 600 students. Nearly half of the students were designated as economically disadvantaged. The student body was comprised predominantly of White students with 20% African American and about 2% each Hispanic and Asian/Pacific Islander. Over the course of the year, we received consent to include 22 different children in our research: 13 boys and 9 girls; 16 White, 4 African American, and 2 Hispanic; one child was identified as requiring special education services.

The work we are reporting here took place during a year that Colleen participated in the classroom as a co-teacher and we were co-researchers investigating not only children's literacy development but also teachers' professional learning to support it. We are part of a group of teacher researchers who support each other in our "mutual yearning for joyful, powerful literacy for all, no matter the setting or label" (Gilrane, Allen, Boyce, Lohr, & Swafford, 2013) and believe in the importance of teacher decision making, authentic texts and honoring children's voices as we support them in learning to construct meaning. While the classroom routines included phonics and other word-level work, our focus in this piece is on those places in the day that lent themselves most to literary engagement: large-group read aloud, independent reading, and independent writing.

Large-Group Read Aloud. At least once per day, and usually more, there were read alouds with the whole class. These might be shared poetry readings, interactive storybook read alouds (Hoyt, 2007) to develop comprehension strategies or literary responses, mini-lessons for the writers' workshop, or simply the joy of reading aloud. While the children were always

engaged and attentive, these sessions were rarely silent; in much the same way as Sipe (2002) described:

...the classroom teachers, while never losing control of the situation, varied their reactions to children's responses in a way that encouraged active participation. For example, while encouraging the children to raise their hands so that they did not all speak at once, one teacher also accepted called responses if they did not override another child. The children therefore became confident in their responses and actively engaged with stories. (p. 482)

We soon learned that if we were reading Mo Willems aloud, the children wanted time to study the front endpapers before the story began, and to see those at the end once it was finished. In a Gerald and Piggie book, they were looking for the Pigeon as well as for how the endpapers had changed to reflect some element of the story. Very often, one or more children would have read the book already, and could barely suppress their excitement about what they knew to be coming up next—but they did, not wanting to interfere in their classmates' first exposure to the story. A favorite way to reread these was as a dialogue between the teacher, reading one character's part, and the children, reading the others.

While they sat on a rug for storybook read aloud, the children's facial expressions, voice intonations, and gestures revealed that they were "dramatizing at the center of the text" (Wolf, Edmiston, & Enciso, 1997, p. 493). Because expressive dialogue is central to the Pigeon and to the Gerald and Piggie books, they served as wonderful mentor texts (Davis & Hill, 2003; Gilrane, 2009; Hansen, 2009; Harwayne, 2001) for use in mini-lessons about conventions during writers' workshop—their experiences *becoming* these characters during previous read aloud sessions helped the children understand very well how punctuation, font characteristics, and illustrations could be used to convey important information to readers.

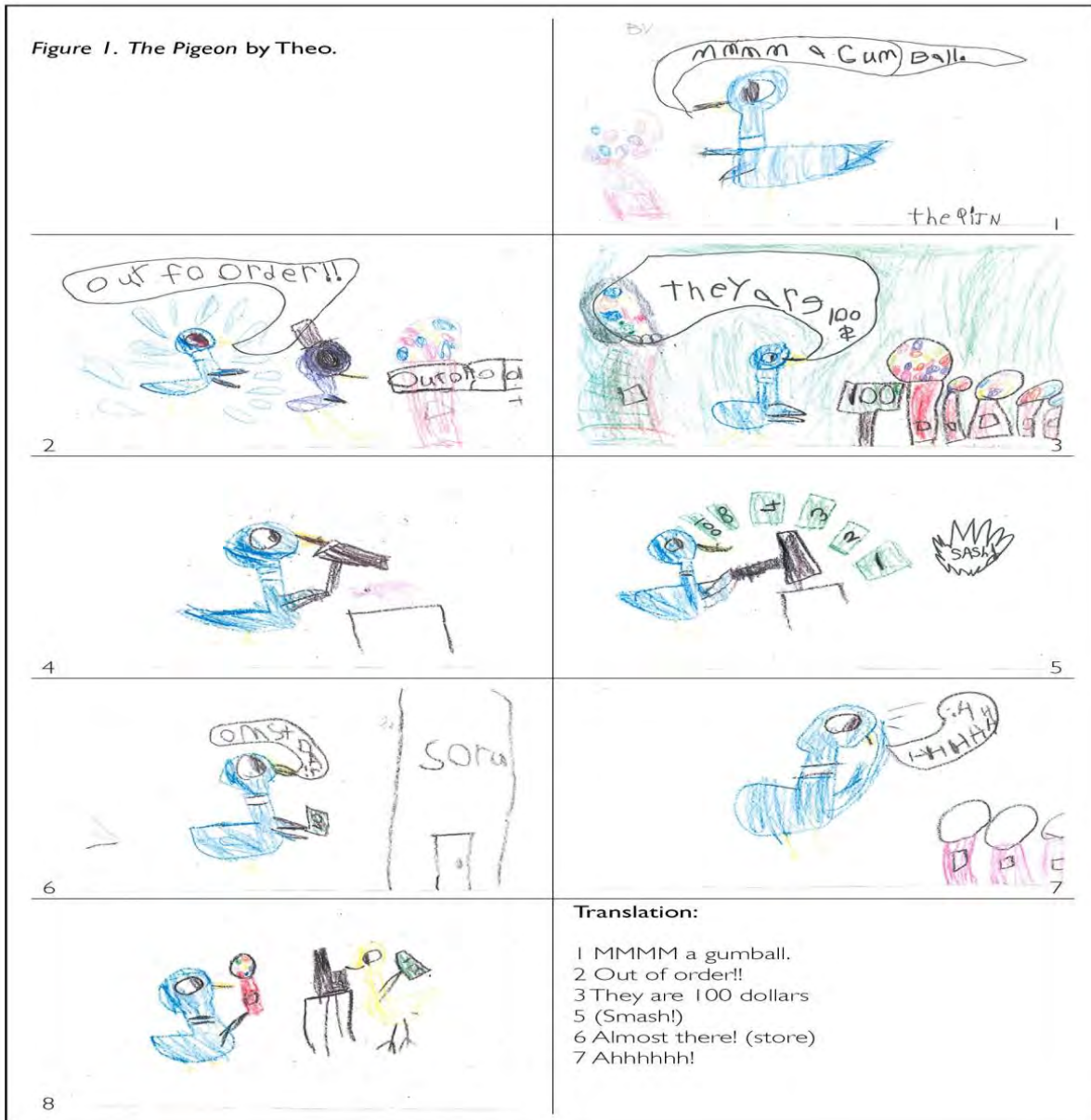
Independent Reading. Several opportunities for independent reading were built in to the day. The classroom library or "Book Nook," furnished with beanbag chairs and a rocking chair, was one of the centers available to children during the literacy block in the morning, when they were not meeting with Maggie for small-group guided reading. It was also usually one of the Warm-Up Work stations available during the time that buses and parents had dropped children off at school, but the bell had not yet rung to officially begin the school day. All of the books were available for selection during these times, and the Book Nook was consistently one of the more popular stations.

The children also maintained baggies of leveled books that they kept in their desks and read at certain assigned times during the day, and any other time that they chose. Maggie met with each student weekly (this was their Warm-Up Work station that day) when they reviewed the past week's reading (at home, during independent reading, and during guided reading) and made a joint decision about progress and whether to change or maintain the level at which they were practicing. Each bag contained four books and one magazine. We had to make a rule that children could not have more than one Mo Willems book in their baggies at any one time, in order to make sure as many children as possible had access to his books.

Spending one-on-one time with children listening to them read their baggie books provided one of the earliest opportunities to see how much they loved Mo Willems. If a teacher pulled up a chair and asked for the child to pick a book to read aloud, it would be Mo Willems if there were one in the baggie! The children read with fluency and prosody and often took time to explain to the teacher what had happened...or what was going to happen; comprehension and engagement were evident in their animated talk. During independent reading, we usually

observed children's demonstrating the kinds of understanding that Sipe (2000) identified as analytical and personal, staying very close to the text.

Independent Writing. While we will discuss the writers' workshop in more detail below, it is important to note here that it was the most important early context for our observing the children's performative (Clyde, 2003; Sipe, 2000, 2002; Wolf et al., 1997) understandings and responses to Mo Willems' books. The children began writing pieces such as Theo's *The Pigeon* (see Figure 1), in which Theo's identification with the Pigeon is evident in the character's frustration at the out-of-order gumball machine, impulsive smashing of the piggy bank to get \$100 out, and purchasing of an entire gumball machine to solve his problem. This writing showed that the children were appropriating for themselves Willems' characters, story world, and conventions. Once Christina brought Willems' publisher's contact information to school, and all of the children wanted to write to him, we made the decision to purchase all of the Pigeon, Gerald and Piggie, and Knuffle Bunny books, and to think about how to infuse these books even more deeply into our classroom.



Engaging the Story World

As we've described, there were many opportunities in the context of the classroom for the children to engage in a variety of types of literary responses; indeed, even on the playground and in the lunchroom. What we wish to do now is to focus on two settings in particular that stand out as almost carnivalesque (Bakhtin, 1984; Sipe, 2002) when we reflect on the children's blissful

performative engagements. One was a specific event, Pig Day, and the other an ongoing, daily part of our literacy instruction, the writers' workshop.

Pig Day

After winter break, the books we'd ordered began to arrive and among them was *Happy Pig Day!* (Willems, 2011a) which opens with Piggie's exuberance in celebrating (with several other dancing pigs) all things pig; this blinds her from seeing Gerald's hurt feelings when he feels left out because he's an elephant. Once she notices he's gone and learns why, she tells him that *everyone* is a pig on Pig Day, and her fellow "pigs" remove their masks and reveal themselves to be other animals wearing pig costumes. Gerald then joins them all in singing, "Oinky Oink Oink!" which means "Happy Pig Day!" in pig.

A day or two later, the class received a letter from Mo Willems that (while a form letter) included a hand-written note, "Good job, Christina," in response to a piece of her writing that had been included with the class' letter. At this point we observed what Shelley Harwayne (1992) calls "author fever" (p. 159) as the children's affinity for Willems exploded; once we had checked our calendars and received administrative approval, we asked the children if they wanted to celebrate Pig Day at school, and they cheered.

Table 1. *Children's Ideas for Pig Day*

Ideas from Brainstorming Session		Written Ideas
make Gerald masks	<i>invite guests</i>	<i>bring drinks (x2)</i>
make Pigeon masks	<i>read Mo Willems books</i>	<i>write his books</i>
make cupcakes (characters)	<i>read to guests</i>	<i>talk about his books (x2)</i>
invite a pig	eat snow cones	<i>read Mo Willems books</i>
have cake	<i>make decorations</i>	<i>make Elephant and Piggie and</i>
invite an elephant	<i>color them like book covers</i>	<i>Pigeon pictures</i>
<i>watch movies</i>	invite a pigeon	<i>make Elephant and Piggie and</i>
have balloons	<i>wear pink</i>	<i>Pigeon decorations</i>
draw characters on balloons	have a piñata	<i>make Piggie with glue and</i>
<i>play games on website</i>	invite a bunny	<i>scissors</i>
<i>dress up a hot dog</i>	<i>do "how to draw a pigeon"</i>	<i>make a Piggie and Gerald</i>
<i>dress up the pigeon</i>	<i>have nametags</i>	
eat hot dogs	write cards to parents	
<i>eat ice cream</i>	write cards to Mo Willems	
invite Mo Willems		

Note: Ideas *in italics* were incorporated into Pig Day

Planning Pig Day. After working out the logistics, we had a whole-class meeting at which ideas were brainstormed—Maggie facilitated, and Colleen took notes. Table 1 shows the ideas generated in that session. While guests, decorations, food and games are part of most real world parties, there are among the children's ideas clear evidence of their shifting into the story world as well: masks of other characters (to balance pig masks in this book), eating hot dogs

(Willems, 2004b), eating ice cream (Willems, 2011c), and wearing pink (pig costumes in this book). Some children also chose to submit written suggestions later (see Figure 2) and reinforced their desire to *read books and talk about them as party activities*. It seems clear that engaging with this story world was what Sipe (2002) described as deeply pleasurable for these children:

Pleasure comes from familiarity: the text reflects a world we expect. Bliss comes from delight in the new—new vistas of experience that take us out of ourselves. I believe that the . . . types of child response highlighted . . . can be seen as expressions of bliss, the exuberant enjoyment of stories that takes children out of the world of the familiar and into the delightful world of the story. (p. 479)

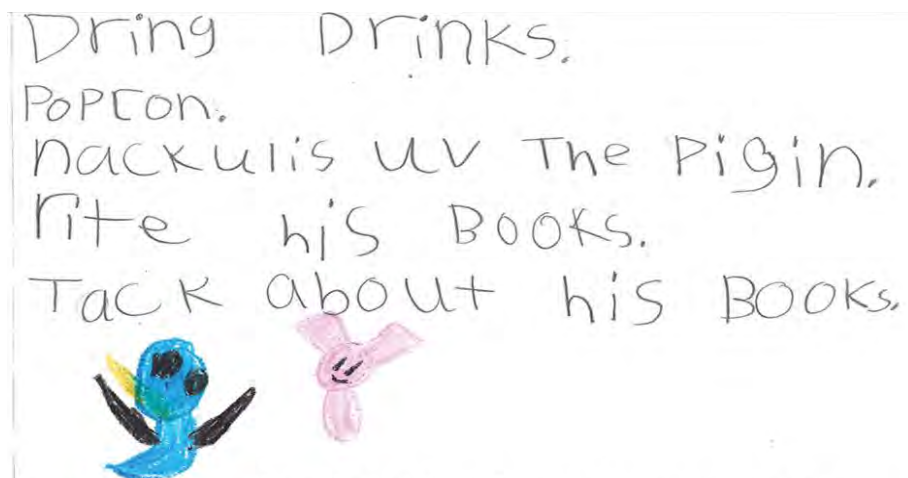


Figure 2. Sample of children's written suggestions.

Translation: Drink drinks.
Popcorn.
Necklace of the Pigeon.
Write his books.
Talk about his books.

We were able to honor many of the children's ideas, even if not all of the specifics, and included ice cream, bananas (Willems, 2010b) and animal crackers (substituted for decorated cookies) as party food. A lucky find of inexpensive pink t-shirts online, along with pink

cardstock copies of a Piggie mask from the *Happy Pig Day Event Kit* (available at PigeonPresents.com) served as pig costumes. We made copies of coloring pages drawn by Mo Willems from the event kit for the children to color and use as party decorations "like book covers," and created paper bag puppet patterns in response to their wishes to make Gerald and Piggie "with glue and scissors."

Pig Day Events. The children arrived on the morning of Pig Day to find a big pink t-shirt and a Mo Willems book on each desk (see Figure 3), and a stack of Piggie masks and leaflets of Pig Day Events (see Figure 4) on a table. They excitedly dressed in their costumes and created nametags (from a pattern in the event kit) on which there were spaces for names and for favorite Gerald and Piggie books. One child colored his whole nametag gray to signify his identification with Gerald. As they read their books, traded with others when finished, and/or began selecting coloring pages to work on as party decorations, warm-up work time merged into the official school day. The children were used to selecting activities and keeping track on a chart, so the events leaflet with its check-off spaces helped to organize the morning, with multiple activities occurring at the same time while Maggie and Colleen coached, listened, or participated as appropriate. This conversational interview Maggie had with Leigh reveals her sophisticated literary understanding of the qualities of the different Willems book series:

Maggie: Why do you like Mo Willems?

Leigh: I like Mo Willems because they have a lot of funny stuff, and my favorite Mo Willems book is *I Broke My Trunk* (Willems, 2011b), and also *Knuffle Bunny Free* (Willems, 2010a).

Maggie: Who's your favorite Mo Willems character?

Leigh: My favorite Mo Willems character is all the characters because the Pigeon, he's like so dramatic, like, (waving arms and yelling) "I want a cookie!" "I want a pigeon!" "I want a puppy!" And I like Elephant and Piggie because they have like, "Yes!" (turns head) "No!" (turns head) "Whoo!" And I like Knuffle Bunny because they have always a problem, they always can solve it.

We agree that "children as young as first grade can demonstrate impressive literary critical abilities" (Sipe, 2000, p. 273) and believe that Leigh's words are evidence of that; as are Fiona's, expressed a bit differently:

Maggie: Why do you like Mo Willems?

Fiona: I like Mo Willems because he makes funny characters, and the Pigeon is kind of funny because his eyes are red and black when he gets angry, and sometimes he falls off a cliff, and I told my dad that I wanted to get a Pigeon book for my house.

Maggie: Which one is your favorite Pigeon book?

Fiona: *The Pigeon Wants a Puppy* (Willems, 2008).



Figure 3. Pink t-shirts and books on desks on Pig Day morning.

_____ Pig Day Events!	_____ Play a game!
_____ Put on a pig costume!	_____ Read a Gerald & Piggie book!
_____ Make a nametag!	_____ Draw the Pigeon!
_____ Decorate the room!	_____ Play a game!
_____ Read a Gerald & Piggie book!	_____ With a partner, use your puppets to act out a Gerald & Piggie book!
_____ Make a Gerald puppet!	_____ Read a Knufflebunny book!
_____ Read a Pigeon book!	_____ Watch Mo Willems on TV!
_____ Make a Piggie puppet!	_____ Eat party food!

Figure 4. Pig Day events checklist.

Paper Bag Puppets. While all of the Pig Day events were enjoyable, and the children especially enjoyed eating party food and watching a DVD of Mo Willems himself teaching them how to draw the Pigeon ("Getting to know Mo Willems," 2009), the energy surrounding the use of paper bag puppets to read and dramatize Gerald and Piggie books was notable even in that celebratory context. Its durability in the weeks and months after Pig Day requires that we discuss it in more depth.

In our planning, as we considered the children's requests to "read Mo Willems books," "Make Piggie with glue and scissors," and "make a Piggie and Gerald," we also thought about the nature of these books as dialogues between Piggie and Gerald, and decided that paper bag puppets of the characters would work. We took generic pig and elephant patterns and substituted the faces of Willems' characters (downloaded from the teacher support materials Willems and his publisher make available at PigeonPresents.com) for those pattern pieces. As they created their puppets on Pig Day, most of the children were faithful to Willems' drawings of Gerald and Piggie, but a few ventured into their own colors and features.

Once everyone had completed at least one of their puppets, we set aside the individual choices for a while, and paired the children up to use their puppets to read books. Some of our favorite moments from that day took place as they sat, stood, danced, and leaped around the room in pairs, performing Piggie and Gerald as Sipe (2002) described:

Storybook read-alouds are interpretive performances by the reader of the story. By acting out the story, children extend this performance to include themselves—their actions, gestures, and expressive language. (p. 477)

Most of them combined being their character with their own body while simultaneously controlling their puppet in such a way as to have the puppet also enacting the character. Images of arms stretched out overhead as characters jumped on the pages of the books still make us smile today.

The puppets also seemed to afford the children the freedom to "talk back" (Sipe, 2002) to the story and insert themselves into it (Clyde, 2003) more than we had observed their doing before. The story at times became more of a narrative prop (Heath & Branscombe, 1986) than a script as the children dramatized "at the edge of text" (Wolf et al., 1997) by assuming Piggie and Gerald personas and creating dialogue through their puppets:

In the world of drama, children may or may not *identify* with the character, but they come to *believe* in the possibility of their character. They construct a narrative world for their characters, imbuing them with intentions, motivations, and reasoning that is often not explicit on the page. The performance is only the surface level; through their decisions the children build a narrative foundation for what occurs on the surface. (Wolf et al., 1997, pp. 497-498)

Recognizing that the power of these affordances should not be lost with the end of Pig Day itself, we continued to keep sets of puppets in the classroom (the children of course took theirs home) and on any day that puppets and books were available during Warm-Up Work or the literacy block, that would be the first station filled to capacity. Anyone listening in would observe that the children had moved so far in their skill and understanding beyond typical conceptions of fluency and comprehension that they were transmediating (Siegel, 2006) the content:

To be able to cast themselves in the space and time of others, to walk between the pages of a book and imagine "what would happen if . . .," not simply to mouth the lines and mimic the motions, but to understand, create, and convey meaning—this echoes Rosenblatt's (1978) description of the "ultimate manifestation" that readers as well as actors must do. (Wolf et al., 1997, p. 493)

Daily Writers' Workshop

As we expand our view of what constitutes literary understanding beyond the traditional elements of narrative, this broader view may reveal more connections between literary understanding and writing ability. For example, what impact would children's aptitude for performative response have on their ability to write forcefully and with strong rhetorical purpose? How might the development of the personalizing impulse assist children in generating written text that embodies their voices? (Sipe, 2000, p. 272)

We have mentioned already that the daily writers' workshop was one of the earliest sites for our observing the children's performative responses to Willems' story world. As children began, like Theo, appropriating the characters, speech/thought bubbles, and/or exuberant punctuation and font characteristics for themselves, they used drawing, talking, gesturing and

dramatizing to rehearse their ideas, supporting the notion that "when young children [write], they [do] not just make meaning through linguistic signs" (Siegel, 2006, p. 66). Wildly popular as soon as they appeared on the scene, these pieces were enthusiastically shared and responded to in conferences and in whole class share sessions (Calkins, 1994; Graves, 1983; Graves & Hansen, 1983).

Following Pig Day, there was more of this activity as the story world of the Pigeon, Gerald, and Piggie became a more familiar and comfortable place for the children, and Willems' characters and storylines were used as narrative props (Heath & Branscombe, 1986; Wolf et al., 1997) with increasing confidence. Some children also came to see themselves as having literary or artistic expertise, to the extent that when we did a short-term focus unit on informational texts, Leigh selected "All About Piggie and Gerald" as the topic she could write about with authority. Later in the spring, when another short-term unit focused on "how-to" books, Max taught the rest of us "How to Trace Piggie," his own adaptation of Willems' step-by-step instructions on drawing the Pigeon (Willems, undated).

In early April, a field trip to Gatlinburg TN to visit an aquarium as part of a unit on sea life combined with the story world to inspire a "prop or 'pretext' for creating a play world which intersects and interacts with both the world of the story and the actual world of the students" (Wolf et al., 1997, p. 494); this lasted until the school year ended in late May. When the school bus drove through Pigeon Forge on its way to Gatlinburg, children seeing the sign on the side of the road shouted, "Pigeon Forge! Look, it says Pigeon!" and with laughter and joy began rehearsing stories they might write about the Pigeon and Pigeon Forge, thinking about their writing even though it wasn't writing time:

Rehearsal covers much more than the mutterings of struggling writers. As Dr. [Donald] Graves points out, productive writers are "in a state of rehearsal all the time." Rehearsal usually begins with an unwritten dialogue within the writers' mind. . . . The writer thinks about characters or arguments, about plot or structure, about words and lines. (Murray, 1978, pp. 376-377)

Table 2. *Children's Writing Influenced by Pigeon Forge Sign on Field Trip*

Author	Title
Emma	The Pigeon Goes to School
	An Elephant Goes to Texas
	The Pigeon Goes to Pigeon Forge
Hilary	The Pigeon Goes to Dollywood!!!
Jeff	The Pigeon Goes to the Zoo
Max	The Pigeon Goes to Knoxville
	The Duckling Goes to Knoxville!?!?
Portia	The Pigeon Goes to Pigeon Forge on a Bus
Susannah	The Pigeon Goes to the Beach
Tristan	The Pigeon Goes Hiking on the Smokies
Wendell	The Pigeon Goes to South Carolina
Yvonne	The Pigeon Goes Everywhere

For our first-graders, rehearsal typically required drawing, talking, dramatizing and gesturing as forms of thinking. Before long the intersections of the Pigeon Forge sign, the Willems' story world, and the children's own real worlds led to the authoring of many pieces of writing with strong voices as they brought "their personal and social experiences, their ideas of

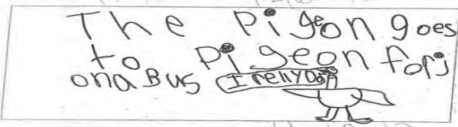


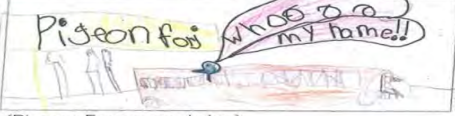

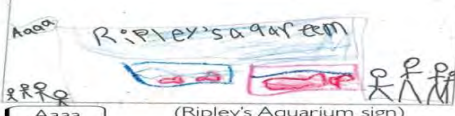
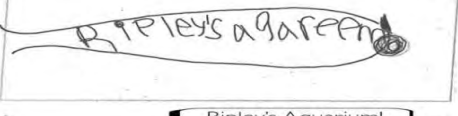

cultural norms and expectations, and . . . imaginative power" (Wolf et al., 1997, p. 494) to their interpretations. As seen in Table 2, no fewer than twelve pieces of writing were authored by nine different children before the school year ended.

For those of us who know the children, some of the real world intersections are obvious: Emma had earlier in the year written a book about her family's trip to Texas to visit her father who was on military duty there. Wendell had grandparents in South Carolina. Tristan's informational text, *How to Survive*, had included chapters on how to build a shelter, gather food, and find safe drinking water in the wilderness. The story world connections seem apparent in the titles themselves, especially Hilary's exuberant use of punctuation. Those who know the voices of Willems' characters will be able to hear the Pigeon's exasperated disbelief in Max's title, *The Duckling Goes to Knoxville!?!?*

We could have selected any of these for a closer look, and chose Portia's (see Figure 5) as much for its short length as its literary qualities. She incorporated her own real world experience of the field trip (including the Pigeon Forge sign), the Pigeon's enthusiasm for buses, and her knowledge of the Pigeon's speech patterns and temper. Her ending, in which the bus driver does not let him off to go the aquarium in Gatlinburg, is an excellent example of the trope of the Pigeon's endless anger and frustration with those who will not let him do what he wants, when he wants. While written with humor, the children's pieces showed that they empathized with the Pigeon.

Figure 5. The Pigeon Goes to Pigeon Forge on a Bus by Portia.

(with translations)

<p>Figure 5. The Pigeon Goes to Pigeon Forge on a Bus by Portia.</p> <p>(with translations)</p>	<p>3-17-12 4-10-12</p>  <p>The Pigeon Goes to Pigeon Forge on a Bus [I really do]</p>
 <p>Ooooo a bus! Can I go to Pigeon Forge with it? 2 Ooooo a bus! Can I go to Pigeon Forge with it?</p>	 <p>Waffle House! 3</p>
 <p>(Pigeon Forge road sign) 4 Whoooo my name!</p>	 <p>(upside down building, sound effects) 5 Wonder Works!</p>
 <p>Aaaa Aaaa (Ripley's Aquarium sign) 6</p>	 <p>Ripley's Aquarium! 7</p>
 <p>the driver just stopped to get some fuel in the back. The end 8</p>	<p>page 8 translation:</p> <p>What!! Aaaaaaaah</p> <p>The driver just stopped to get some fuel in the back. The end</p>

Closing Thoughts

Now that Maggie lives in a different state, we are not able to co-teach and co-learn in the same classroom as frequently as before—although we continue to work together as much as we can. In October of 2013, when a professional meeting brought Colleen to the city where Maggie now lives, she arrived early in order to spend two full days in Maggie's current first grade. Driving to school one morning, discussing that evening's dinner plans, Maggie asked how Colleen had decided on a particular restaurant. When Colleen began explaining, "Last night after we ordered our food, I asked Michael for his map," Maggie started singing, "Map! Map! Mappy

Map Map!" from a recent Gerald and Piggie book, *Let's Go for a Drive!* (Willems, 2012). She knew the tune from listening to our children spontaneously start singing "Oink! Oink! Oinky Oink Oink!" on Pig Day two years ago. . . and then from time to time afterward.

Both of our lives continue to be enriched by our accepting the children's invitation into the story world of Mo Willems two years ago, as Maggie's current children and Colleen's teacher education students join us in the engagement. While we did not focus on it in this article, it's important to note (for those who are wondering) that our children did, eventually, all achieve adequate or higher scores on required curriculum-based measures of decoding, fluency, and comprehension according to district norms. Many of them exceeded expectations on the quarterly mandated writing assessment—everyone at least "passed." For our own information we took running records throughout the year and analyzed children's miscues in order to support their continued growth and progress as readers.

The reading, writing, and literary responses we've described here assume competence with basic literacy skills, and we worked to make sure our students had those. We do not believe that it's enough to stop with "basic skills" especially when those are defined in such narrow ways as test scores. We are hopeful that the advent of the Common Core State Standards will create space for the kinds of contexts necessary to support children's complex literary responses, as primary teachers work toward goals such as these for their children:

- compare and contrast the adventures and experiences of characters in stories,
- use illustrations and details in a story to describe its characters, setting, or events,
- with prompting and support, read prose and poetry of appropriate complexity for grade 1,
- write informative/explanatory texts in which they name a topic, supply some facts about the topic, and provide a sense of closure,

- write narratives in which they recount two or more appropriately sequenced events, include some details regarding what happened, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide some sense of closure, and
- with guidance and support from adults, focus on a topic, respond to questions and suggestions from peers, and add details to strengthen writing as needed.

On their way to the Common Core, many teachers are still feeling pressured by traditional tests, especially in response to Race to the Top and its requirements. In those cases, we hope our story serves as a demonstration that adequate performance on tests does not require limiting our curriculum to things that look like tests. In fact, allowing children to use a variety of forms of representation will allow even more of them to build on their particular strengths, as Eisner (1997) explained:

Equity of opportunity . . . resides in school programs that make it possible for students to follow their bliss, to pursue their interests, to find out what they are good at. . . . We ought to try to grasp what might be beyond our reach—or what's a heaven for?" (p. 353)

More than ever, our world requires that we have not only basic skills but also empathy for others, and yearning for a just world. We close with these words in which we find some reflected images, and a hopeful vision for the future:

In traditional classrooms, children's individual thoughts and talents are often separated from their peers as children work in isolation and through uniform symbolic systems for expression. But in the collaborative work of dramatic interpretation, individuals come together to create new understandings. In the enactments of seemingly simple scenes, multiple sources of knowledge meet together: individual stories, voices, dialects, accents, resources and reflections flow into a rich representation of a community of learners. . . .

In such an atmosphere, cultural preferences as well as individual learning styles, find room for expression. (Wolf et al., 1997, p. 503)

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Colleen Gilrhane is an associate professor in the Department of Theory and Practice in Teacher Education at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, where she teaches courses in literacy and in elementary education. Her teaching and research interests focus on working with teachers to create communities in which all learners have access to literacy that is rich, powerful, and joyful. **Email: cgilrane@utk.edu**

Maggie Lingle Lohr is a first grade teacher at Underwood Elementary School in Raleigh, NC. She has served as a mentor teacher and allows her classroom to serve as a site for practica and observations by preservice and inservice teachers to support her and their continued professional learning. **Email: mlohr@wcpss.net**

Complexity of Perspectives: WWII Historical Fiction of the Pacific Front

Belinda Louie

With the establishment of the Holocaust Memorial Museum in 1993 in Washington DC, U.S. citizens have become more aware of the European front of World War II. The atomic bomb archive of the Museum of World War II in Boston, the USS Arizona Memorial at Honolulu, and the Japanese-American Redress in 2008 have brought attention to the Japanese-American internment between 1942 and 1945. However, U.S. citizens still have very limited understanding of the Pacific front of World War II involving Japan and other Asian countries. It was not until the publication of *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II* (Chang, 1998) that the general public gained access to a more balanced understanding of the Japanese involvement in the war. Chen (2009) discussed the far-reaching impact of the Japanese war crimes in many Asian countries during WWII, leaving “survivors dealing with physical pain, emotional trauma, poverty, and social discrimination for the rest of their lives” (p. 4). Nevertheless, it seems that few American citizens have taken advantage of this access.

For instance, the teachers in my children’s and young adult literature seminar just finished reading Linda Sue Park’s *When My Name was Keoko* (2002). This book for intermediate grade took place from 1940-1945 in Japanese-occupied Korea. Japanese soldiers stripped Korean families of their cultural symbols. Children learned only Japanese history and language at school. Everyone had to convert their names from Korean to Japanese. Park’s historical novel is well-researched, including bibliography and author’s note that explains what happened to Korea after WWII. Many teachers expressed surprise at their lack of knowledge of this historical Japanese-Korean tension and its place in WWII. Some had seen the North Korean leader, Kim Jong-un, on the front page of *Time Magazine* in February 2012. They knew about the Japanese bombing

of Pearl Harbor. One teacher vaguely recalled the tension among Korea, China, and Japan because of the Japanese prime minister's hesitance to accept the culpability for the "comfort women" (women and girls forced into sexual slavery by the Japanese Imperial Army during WWII). The teachers in my seminar had heard about the American bombing of Hiroshima that ended the Japanese military action in Asia. Some teachers had read children's literature on Japanese-American internment camps, one of which was located less than 10 miles from our university campus. As the teachers examined historical literature titles they would introduce to their students, a question emerged: To what extent does K-12 historical fiction published in the United States help students understand history, particularly the Asian front during WWII that impacted one quarter of the world by land mass and influenced the world beyond Asia?

Teachers understood the inherent value of historical fiction as a lens into historical learning. In a global sense, they asked: Who were the victims in WWII, the Koreans or the Japanese? And from whose point of view? This article presents an analysis of using these two questions to examine the Japanese and Japanese-American and the Korean and Korean-American juvenile historical fiction available in the United States. By reading a collection of literature, readers can triangulate events, settings, and perspectives gathered by close reading, resulting in an informed, critical understanding of the complexity of historical perspectives.

Historical Fiction

Historical fiction refers to works of realistic fiction that are set within the historical past (Hancock, 2004; Kiefer, Hepler, & Hickman, 2007). The narrative may portray invented characters and dialogue, but all must seem accurate to the time period. A book may not be classified as historical fiction just because it is set 30 years or more in the past. To qualify as historical fiction, the book must also include references to historical figures and substantial

information about historical events, though the references and the facts may be skewed (McElmeel, 2009). More specifically, to be a work of historical fiction, the setting must be integral to the actions of the characters. Historically-based events, characters, and the requisite specific setting define a work of historical fiction.

In the last two decades, many educators have asserted that reading historical fiction provides students with a vicarious experience for places and people they could, otherwise, never know (Allen & Landaker, 2004; Ammon & Tunnell, 1992; Levstic & Pappas, 1992; Zarnowski, 2006). Quality historical fiction creates an emotional connection between children of today and their counterparts. Scholars and practitioners in social studies and literacy have recognized the importance of learning history in ways that actively engage students in cognitive and empathetic interactions with the texts (Dodd, 1999; Schur, 2007). In addition, Crawford and Zygouris-Coe (2008) believe that historical fiction helps students develop a critical understanding of complex social issues and age-old dilemmas. When history is presented from characters' points of view, students are exposed to multiple perspectives on events, revealing the complexity of an issue. Understanding the restraints that historical figures faced, such as abiding by cultural conventions, students may empathize with the characters' struggles in making choices. However, this understanding must be accompanied by research done by teachers, who can then guide students to interpret the issues at hand in the context of historical facts.

Adopting a critical stance is especially important when readers approach multicultural historical fiction (McLaughlin & DeVogd, 2004). For example, when reading a historical fiction on Holocaust, students should go beyond an aesthetic response of empathizing with the characters who lost families and homes. They need to go further than an efferent understanding which consists of facts and knowledge about the Holocaust. They must develop critical responses

by examining various perspectives on the Holocaust. Readers should first analyze their own misconceptions and biases revealed in their reading of a multicultural literary work. Such biases should be considered “as subject matter for analysis, interpretation, and criticism” (Cai, 2008, p. 217). Classroom discussion of such individual biases can further engage readers to compare their assumptions with those of others.

Reading historical fiction can also help students understand their own and others’ heritages. They learn about people, values, beliefs, hardships, and physical surroundings common to a historical period. Through historical fiction, children can begin to visualize the sweep of history and discover that people depend upon one another for similar needs. When human relationships deteriorate, tragedy usually results. Historical fiction allows children to judge relationships and to realize that their own presents and futures are linked to the actions in the past (Norton & Norton, 2009). One must also be cautious, however, that children do not visualize history through a single perspective. In a previous study on Korean-American juvenile literature (Louie, 2005), I discovered that the Korean lens on WWII was in sharp contrast to the Japanese and Japanese-American one. Thus, I set out on this project to examine their respective perspectives through historical fiction. My goal is to have this exploration inspire teachers to compare and contrast historical fiction of the same period. Through close and critical reading of various texts, students can develop a repertoire of literary, cultural, and historical knowledge.

Book Selection

In order to analyze the Japanese/Japanese-American and Korean/Korean-American juvenile literature that provides access to understanding the Asian front of World War II, it is important for teachers to understand the scope of this collection that is available to students. Such knowledge will motivate teachers to include non-fiction materials as a context to interpret

the issues embedded in historical fiction. I identified Japanese/Japanese-American and Korean/Korean-American historical fiction through various sources: *Books In Print* database, online booksellers, publishers' catalogs, local county library catalogs, local city library catalogs, the second edition of *Kaleidoscope* (Barrera, Thompson, & Dressman, 1997), the third edition of *Kaleidoscope* (Yokota, 2001), the fourth edition of *Kaleidoscope* (Hansen-Krening, Aoki, & Mizokawa, 2003), the multicultural booklist by the Cooperative Children's Book Center (Kruse, Horning, & Schliesman, 1997), and professional journals such as *School Library Journal*, *Booklist*, *Booklinks*, *The Horn Book Magazine*, and *The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*. These data sources were chosen after consulting similar studies on other juvenile literature collections (Barrera, Quiroa, & West-Williams, 1999; Cai, 1994; Heller, Cunningham, Lee, & Heller, 2000; Leu, 2001). These sources also assured that exemplary books would be included in the collection. The terms *Korean-American*, *Korean*, *Korean-American juvenile literature*, and *Korean juvenile literature* were used in the subject and the keyword search fields. I used similar terms to identify the Japanese collection. The search established a booklist of 106 books, of which 88 were Japanese/Japanese-American historical fiction, and 18 were Korean/Korean-American historical fiction. I read all 106 titles, which I purchased or borrowed from libraries. A substantial number of titles in each collection had World War II (including the pre-war events and post-war reconstruction) as their settings, indicating that World War II remains an important period to both communities.

I used WWII-related setting as the criterion for book selection. Among the 88 Japanese-American historical fiction titles, 50% of the books (44 titles) were related to World War II. The prevailing sentiment was the suffering of the Japanese and Japanese-Americans during World War II. Of the Korean-American historical fiction titles, 50% of the books (9 titles), had pre-

and post-World War II as their setting. The prevailing sentiment was the suffering of the Koreans during World War II because of the aggressive Japanese military activities in Korea.

Table 1: World War II Collection of Japan-American and Korean-American Historical Fiction

Historical Fiction	WWII Era	Author Ethnicity	Authors with Multiple Titles	Setting	Publication Period
Japanese & Japanese-American	44 titles	34 authors: 12 heritage, 22 non-heritage	Eleanor Coerr: 2	US: 25	1950s: 1 title
			Joy Kogawa: 2	Japan: 12	1960s:
			Harry Mazer: 2	Canada: 3	1970s: 4 titles
			Ken Mochizuki: 2	Lithuania: 2	1980s: 10 titles
			Graham Salisbury: 2	Australia: 1	1990s: 16 titles
			Allen Say: 2	Philippines: 1	2000s: 12 titles
			Gail Tsukiyama: 2		2010s 1 title
		Yoshiko Uchida: 5	3 translated from Japanese		
Korean & Korean-American	9 titles	8 authors: 7 heritage, 1 non-heritage	Frances Park: 2	US: 2	1960s
			Sook Nyul Choi: 2	Korea: 7	1970s
					1980s: 1 title
				No translated titles	1990s: 5 titles
					2000s: 2 titles
				2010s: 1 titles	

There are a number of personal memoirs in both collections. I did not differentiate the memoirs from other historical fiction titles in my analysis because all the memoirs highlighted the suffering of countrymen in the war. The perspectives offered by the memoir authors were very similar to those offered by the historical fiction authors. Likewise, author's ethnicity was

not a determining factor in the sentiment expressed in the books. In the Japanese/Japanese American collection, 22 of the 34 authors are not of Japanese descent. Clearly, all of them had become acculturated to the historical frame that their sympathetic stance towards the Japanese and Japanese-Americans was very similar to that of the authors of Japanese descent.

Analysis

In order to answer the questions: Who were the victims in the Second World War, the Koreans or the Japanese? And from whose point of view? I first provide a historical timeline for both Japan and Korea (See Table 2). The timeline gives us a factual context in which to place the books and to understand how much the books reflect history. To understand the impact of WWII on these peoples, we need to know the preceding events and the aftermath of the war. Ironically, both collections have different perspectives on who the aggressors were; yet they share the themes of victimization and dignity. When the authors lamented at how the war victimized the literary characters, they also celebrated the dignity and strength these characters demonstrated throughout the ordeal of war. The books then ended with a sense of hope that human resilience can overcome the atrocities of war.

Both groups identified themselves as victims. Uniquely, the Koreans accused the Japanese as aggressors who brought havoc into their lives during WWII. In contrast, the Japanese-American and the Japanese books failed to mention Korea during WWII and said little regarding Japanese military action in China and other Asian countries. It is worth noting that as we examine the drama of historical fiction on a global stage, we can use historical facts to identify the actors who should be on stage. Even though the protagonists of the books might be ordinary people in a small town, the readers should not ignore the larger political powers at work, invisible within the narrative of the books but having significant impact on the daily

existence of the book characters. A critical question is whether the author of the historical fiction acknowledged the political actors at large. With the setting, both time and place, being integral to historical fiction, a confined setting ignoring the larger historical context may lead to biased perspectives. Without bringing in the broader context, the authors lead the readers to interpret the perspectives based on a limited set of circumstances. Cai (2004) advocated for readers to engage in critical reading, analyzing the perspectives set forth by the text before accepting or rejecting them. Teachers can consult additional historical content so that they can better guide students to read critically. For instance, teachers can read Bix (2001) along with WWII Japanese/Japanese-American historical fiction. In his Pulitzer award winner, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*, Bix (2001) provided detailed documentation about the strong, decisive role Emperor Hirohito played in wartime operations, from the takeover of Manchuria in 1931 through the attack on Pearl Harbor, and, ultimately to the unconditional surrender consent in 1945. He stubbornly prolonged the war effort and then used the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the Soviet entrance into the war as an escape route from a no-win situation.

Table 2: Timeline for Japan and Korea before and after WWII

Time	Japan	Korea
1901-1910	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 1904, Japan launched a surprise military attack on Russian navy • Japan annexed Korea. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Japan began to occupy Korea in 1910.
1911-1920	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 1910, Japan annexed Korea after 3 years of fighting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Japan implemented its “cultural policy” in Korea to start eliminating Korean cultural elements in 1919.
1921-1930	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extreme nationalism began to take hold in Japan to preserve traditional Japanese values and to reject "Western" influence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many Korean underground groups emerged to resist the Japanese occupation of Korea.
1931-1940	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 1931, Japan invaded Manchuria (Northeast China), with an extensive Russian border. • In 1937, Japan launched a full-scale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 1938, the Japanese government in Korea ordered all Koreans to change their Korean names to Japanese-style names.

1941-1950	<p>attack of China</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 1941, military conflicts erupted along the border of Russia and Japanese-occupied Manchuria. • In 1941, Japanese war planes bombed Pearl Harbor. • Starting in 1942, Japanese soldiers occupied Hong Kong, the Philippines, Thailand, Burma, Dutch East Indies, and Malaya. • In 1945, the USA dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. • In 1945, the Russian military invaded Manchuria and moved into Korea. • Between 1945 and 1952, the U.S. occupying forces in Japan, led by General Douglas A. MacArthur, enacted widespread military, political, economic, and social reforms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 1945, Russian forces landed in Korea. • In 1954, Korea was divided between the Soviet (northern) occupying forces and American (southern) occupying forces at the 38th parallel.
1951-1960	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Japan focused on reconstruction. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Korea and South Korea focused on reconstruction.

Japanese and Japanese-Americans. Although the historical timeline clearly indicates that Japan engaged in aggressive military activities in Asian countries and bombed Pearl Harbor in the United States, the whole set of Japanese and Japanese-American historical fiction hardly mentioned the activities at the Pacific front. Instead of focusing on Japanese military aggression in WWII, 41 out of the 44 WWII-related titles focused on the suffering of the Japanese and individuals of Japanese descent in United States, Canada, and Australia. Japanese nationals also appeared as victims following the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings. For example, in *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes* (Coerr, 1977), Sadako was hospitalized with the dreaded atomic bomb disease, leukemia. In *Mieko and the Fifth Treasure* (Coerr, 1993), when Nagasaki was bombed, Mieko's nearby village was turned into ruins, and her hand was badly injured. *Shin's Tricycle* (Kodama, 1995) is a poignant historical fiction about a father unearthing his son, Shin's

treasured tricycle from the lawn during the process of relocating the remains. Shin suffered a painful death after the bombing of Hiroshima. The author wrote about the beautiful morning of the tragic day; soldiers “repairing the road in front of our house, laughed as they watched the red tricycle speed by” (p. 8). If readers only accept the perspectives presented in this book without a wider context, they will likely condemn the enemies who bombed a peaceful place, where soldiers’ jobs were to repair roads. Although most Japanese characters in the historical fiction perceived themselves as victims of war, they rose up with strength and dignity to overcome the aftermath of the bombs. Tatsuharu Kodama (1995), Yukio Tsuchiya (1988), and Toshi Maruki (1980), whose books were translated from Japanese into English, included author’s notes about the heroic process of rebuilding Japan and the civilians’ solemn determination to promote peace. Although the above books are of third-and fourth-grade reading level, the intensely emotional content makes the book more appropriate for upper intermediate grades and middle school.

Many of the historical fictions with a U.S. setting portrayed Japanese-Americans as victims in the war because of the internment experience. After Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 in 1942, authorizing local military commanders to establish exclusion zones, which banned all people of Japanese ancestry from the Pacific coast, including all of California and much of Oregon, Washington and Arizona, except for those in internment camps. Over 110,000 people of Japanese heritage were forced into “War Relocation Camps,” 62 percent of the internees were American citizens (Takaki, 1990). Some of the historical titles portrayed the pain that the internment inflicted upon the Japanese-Americans.

Yoshiko Uchida authored a series for intermediate grades on the negative impact of the internment camp on Japanese Americans. *Journey to Topaz* (1971), *Journey Home* (1978), *Desert Exile* (1982), and *The Bracelet* (1993) showed the hardship for the Japanese Americans

disposing of all their properties. When they had to reconstruct their temporary homes in the concentration camps, it was humiliating and degrading. In *Farewell to Manzanar* (for middle school and above) (Houston & Houston, 1983) and *Weedflower* (3rd grade and above) (Kadohata, 2006), readers learn much about the details of camp life, living behind barbed wire, making homes in horse stables, and being hovered over by searchlight towers and armed guards. Moss (2013) presented a memoir of Kenichi Zenimura in *Barbed Wire Baseball* (3rd grade and above). According to the author's note, "...the baseball field he so lovingly crafted in the middle of the desert. It was a symbol of hope, of the resilience of the human spirit, of making life normal in the most abnormal times" (Moss, 2013, p. 39). Zenimura personified how Japanese-American families survived the indignities of forced detention with grace and resourcefulness.

Japanese in the West. Japanese people also suffered injustice in other western countries. In *The Divine Wind: A Love Story* (middle school) (Disher, 1998), an Australian boy and a Japanese-Australian girl fell in love but were driven apart when the town turned against its Japanese residents. In *The Eternal Spring of Mr. Ito* (middle school and above) (Garrigue, 1985), a beloved Japanese-Canadian was rejected by the community after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Although it happened in the United States, persons of Japanese ancestry became targets of police round-ups and forced evacuation in Canada. When Sara, the protagonist, visited the camp, she saw a bouquet of grasses arranged in a bottle on a cotton runner. "It looked beautiful in its spartan surroundings" (p. 151). The calm and gentle manners of Mrs. Ito reflected peace and strength, in sharp contrast to her reality as a victim of wartime and discrimination. Based on her own experiences, Joy Kogawa told the story of the evacuation, relocation, and dispersal of Canadian citizens of Japanese ancestry in *Obasan* (1981) (high school) and *in Naomi's Road* (1986) (middle school). In her books, Kogawa (1981) considered Naomi's and her mother's

chosen silence a sign of weakness: “Our wordlessness was our mutual destruction” (Kogawa, 1981, p. 291). However, by ending the book with Aunt Emily’s participation in the Japanese Canadian Redress Crusade, Kogawa portrayed the Japanese-Canadians’ strength and dignity to find their voices to address the wrongs against them during WWII.

Koreans and Korean-Americans. The Korean suffering during the first half of the twentieth century is the predominant theme in the 9 books of this period. Korean citizens bore much pain during the 36 years of Japanese occupation as the Japanese military government forcefully removed Korean culture, including their names, from their lives. After the Japanese defeat in 1945, Soviet soldiers became the new oppressors in Korea. The subsequent Korean War between North and South Korea also added to the destruction of the country and its people.

There are two Korean historical fiction books on the Japanese occupation of Korea. In *When My Name was Keoko* (2006) (intermediate and above), Linda Sue Park chronicled the experiences of 10-year-old Sun-hee and her 13-year-old brother Tae-yul. The children spoke and studied Japanese at school. Their own Korean language, their flag, their folklore, even their names were forbidden under the Japanese rule. When World War II came to Korea, the Japanese even expected their Korean subjects to fight on their side. Many Koreans, including the children’s uncle, joined the underground resistance. It was a time of turmoil and tension in all Korean households. In spite of the suppression, father led a quiet life while secretly writing articles for the underground paper published by the resistance. Park delivered a message that while enemies could conquer the Korean land, the Korean spirit remained strong in its quietness, ready to re-bloom like the rose of Sharon tree at the book’s end. In *Year of Impossible Goodbyes* (1991) (middle school and above), Sook Nyul Choi captured Korean suffering under Japanese occupation and the Soviet invasion. Ten-year-old Sookan's resistance-fighter father left their

homeland in North Korea to hide in Manchuria. Her older brothers were taken to toil in Japanese labor camps. Sookan's family ran a sock factory for the Japanese war effort. The Japanese forced many young girls to be comfort women during the war. Sookan and her family finally reunited as they courageously cross the 38th parallel on foot. Victimized by the wars, the Korean characters held onto hope to rebuild their lives against all odds.

The division of Korea between north and south forced many families to leave North Korea when the Russians were moving close. In *The Surrendered* (2010) (high school), Chang-Rae Lee authored a compelling story inspired by information obtained from his own father. Eleven-year-old June Han fled military combat during the Korean War. Eventually brought to an orphanage near Seoul, Jun Han received much needed care from the director's wife, who herself was haunted by the murders of her parents by the Japanese in Manchuria. Soo, a young schoolgirl who lived in North Korea, also crossed the border to join her father in the south. In *My Freedom Trip: A Child's Escape from North Korea* (1998) (intermediate and above), Frances and Ginger Park used their mother's escape experience to weave the story of a young refugee. Young Soo helped readers see the horror of the war through a child's eyes. In *To Swim Across the World* (2001) (middle school and above), the Park sisters again created a historical fiction based on their family's experience. With their mother from North Korea and their father from the rural south, the Park sisters showed Korean suffering across the Japanese occupation, the Soviet dominance, and the Korean War. Six decades of turbulence wrecked the Korean peninsula and the lives of Koreans--rich and poor, young and old. As readers are touched by the horror of the war, they are also impressed by the strength and dignity of the Korean characters.

Like other immigrants, Korean-Americans suffered from discrimination and low-paying jobs when they left their war-torn country to live in the United States. Kim Ronyoung created a

tale of two generations of Korean-Americans in pre- and post-World War II Los Angeles in *Clay Walls* (1987) (high school). Haesu, born in an upper-class Korean family, found it hard to perform manual labor in the U.S. She yearned to return to her home country. Again, with strength and dignity, the family persevered, bringing hope for the next generation

Implications

WWII tension between Japan and Korea is still relevant in today's international relationship. During his April 2014 Asian trip, President Obama addressed historical tensions between U.S. allies, Japan, and South Korea, during a news conference in Seoul. He commented that Japan's use of South Korean "comfort women" during the Second World War was an egregious violation of human rights. My goal of this paper is not to condemn any nation but to help teachers and students explore the complexity of perspectives with a balanced understanding of events within historical fiction. Students of Japanese and Korean descent in our classrooms should not bear the guilt or bitterness of their forefathers. Caucasian students, without the burden of blame and guilt, read books about how white slave owners oppressed black slaves before President Lincoln's emancipation proclamation. Very similar to our teaching of books on the Holocaust, we do not place the burden of shame on students with German heritage.

Because each historical fiction is only a snapshot of history, each title tends to focus on a biased perspective without taking into account a broader context of events. Teachers can address this problem by introducing a balanced text set to include a variety of perspectives. For the Asian front of WWII, I recommend a middle school unit using *When My Name Was Keoko* (Park, 2002), *Faithful Elephants* (Tsuchiya, 1988), *Shin's Bicycle* (Kodama, 1995), *Journey to Topaz* (Uchida, 1971), and *Passage to Freedom: The Sugihara Story* (Mochizuki, 2003). Focusing on

the interaction among characters, settings, and perspectives, teachers can guide students to read historical fiction with a critical stance.

Table 3: Understanding perspectives using historical fiction

After using a historical event timeline to present the basic facts of the historical period, teachers can use the following table to guide instruction.

Literary Element	Instructional Questions
Characters	Who are/were the historical figures/characters in this historical period? Who are the characters in the book? What types of characters are there in the historical timeline but missing in the book?
Setting	What is the setting of the book?
Perspective	How do the characters think about what is happening to them?
Character and Setting	How does the setting in which each character lives affect his or her way of thinking? What will happen to the character if s/he does not share the thinking of those who live around him or her? How would the characters change their thinking and behaviors if they lived in another setting?

A person's thinking and behaviors may shift with the setting and his or her position within.

Readers also need to consider what may happen if one has to choose between following orders and hurting someone or not following orders and either being killed or having their families killed. By asking students to read historical fiction presented by different groups, in the context of factual information, this article demonstrates how a set of historical fiction can support the CCSS anchors, "analyz[ing] how two or more texts address similar themes ... in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take" (NGA & CCSSO, 2010, p.10).

Crawford and Zygouris-Coe's (2008) stated that historical fiction provides students with a better understanding of the period or event. The comprehensiveness of the knowledge depends on information included in the collection of published historical fiction for a certain historical

period. In order to present a more balanced portrayal of the Pacific front of the Second World War, teachers must include historical texts about different countries in the Pacific Rim.

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Belinda Louie is a professor of education at the University of Washington Tacoma. She teaches courses on literacy and children's literature. Her scholarship focuses on using literature to enhance language and literacy development. Contact her at blouie@uw.edu

Children's Literature Reviews **Explorations and Insights: Equity and Justice in Children's Literature**

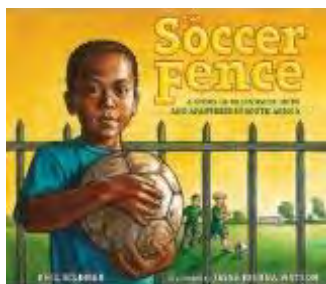
Ann Berger-Knorr and Mary Napoli

We are delighted to share our first column. For the past year or so, we have been involved in a focused reading of multicultural literature that explores issues of justice and equity. Multicultural literature is a powerful way to foster understanding and to explore issues of social justice (Nieto, 2010), global citizenship (Banks, 2007), and critical engagement (Morell & Morell, 2012). In our focused reading, we wondered: How often do teachers consider issues of power in their selection of multicultural literature for the classroom? While most teachers place emphasis on the cultural experiences and authenticity of characters when selecting multicultural literature, what role does the consideration of power and power differentials play in that selection process? In "Multicultural Children's Literature as an Instrument of Power," Ching (2005) differentiates the complexities of two kinds of multicultural literature: pluralism [literature] and pluralism plus power [literature]. In Ching's (2005) words:

"[P]luralism celebrates diversity, inclusiveness, and common humanity
...these books advocate knowledge of diverse cultural practices, experiences, and significant people. They also express appreciation for cultural differences and instill pride in one's own culture. Despite these strengths, these books only serve half the purpose of multiculturalism in education. Collectively, as a group, they do not directly address power. Hence, if one hopes to teach multiculturalism's full complexity, one must venture into the latter sphere—pluralism that manifests power...literary works [that] foreground the ways in which power, race, and culture produce equity and inequity in society."
(p. 132)

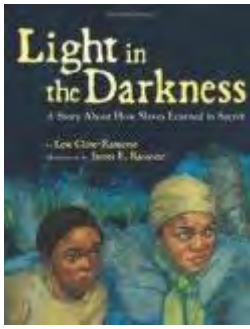
With the above in mind, the books featured in this column explore issues of power and inequality - head on. Our intention was to not only include multicultural literature published in 2013/2014, but titles that explored issues of power and power differentials around the areas of gender, race, culture, and class.

Books for Younger Readers: K-2



Bildner, Phil. (2014). *The Soccer Fence: A Story of Friendship, Hope and Apartheid in South Africa*. Illus. by Jesse Joshua Watson. New York, NY: G.P. Putnam's Sons/Penguin.

Hector wants to play soccer on a real soccer field, but apartheid makes it very difficult. During trips to a wealthier neighborhood, he notices a white boy playing soccer with a real soccer ball on a grass-covered surface. The author gently touches upon aspects of South African history, including the release of Nelson Mandela and the end of apartheid. The story flashes forward to Mandela's election as president and the two boys at the African Soccer Cup nationals. The final pages return the reader to the grass soccer field. This time, the boys talk about the professional soccer players whom they admire. The book can be used to spark critical conversation about topics of prejudice and discrimination. The author does include an extensive note and timeline. [MN]



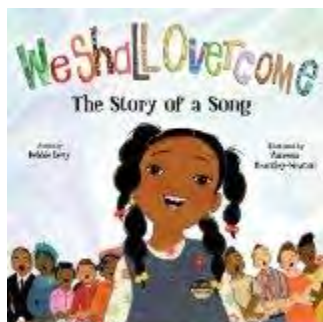
Cline-Ransome, Lesa. (2013). *Light in the Darkness: A Story About How Slaves Learned to Read*. Illus. by James E. Ransome. New York, NY: Disney Hyperion Books.

This powerful picture book introduces readers to Rosa, a young slave girl and her mother, who walk through the darkness to go to 'pit school.' The pit school was a large hole dug deep in the ground and covered with brush and branches, where slaves gathered to learn how to read. The lessons were taught in secret by a fellow slave who had learned to read and wanted to share this 'light' with others despite the risks. There was much at risk for meeting in secret, but this did not stop the many men, women, and children who wanted to fulfil their dream of learning to read. The enduring words accented by beautiful watercolor illustrations make this a compelling story about courage and determination. Partner with *Under the freedom tree* (2014), a poetry selection by Susan VanHecke, published by Charlesbridge. [MN]



Dempsey, Kristy. (2014). *A Dance Like Starlight: One Ballerina's Dream*. Illus. by Floyd Cooper. New York, NY: Philomel Books.

All ballerinas have a wish, a dream, and a desire - to be a prima ballerina. But, one little ballerina, in particular, has a problem. It's the 1950's, she's "colored," and she's not allowed to perform on stage due to the color of her skin. Then, one day, news arrives of Janet Collins' performance. Janet Collins is the first African American ballerina hired to perform under contract with the Metropolitan Opera in New York City. Excited, the little ballerina attends the performance with her mother to see Miss Collins dance. "When she glides onto the stage, I don't know if I am dreaming, if I am even breathing ... my heart jumps up from where I'm sitting ... It's like Miss Collins is dancing for me, only for me, showing me who I can be." Inspired by the talents of Miss Collins, this is the story of an (imagined) little ballerina who holds fast to her dreams and realizes, "You don't need stars in the sky to make your dreams come true." [ABK]



Levy, Debbie. (2013). *We Shall Overcome: The Story of a Song*. Illus. by Vanessa Brantley-Newton. New York, NY: Disney. Jump at the Sun Books.

"We shall overcome, we shall overcome, we shall overcome some day. Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe, we shall overcome some day." This nonfiction picture book, written in lyrical verse, chronicles the life and the story behind the song, We Shall Overcome. Whether sung in the cotton fields of the deep south, or inside restaurants or churches or jails; whether sung on buses or trains or marches, this song has come to represent the fight for freedom, equality and justice - around the world. From slavery to the civil rights movement to the struggles and oppressions of other countries as well, We Shall Overcome is the people's song. As the author notes in the end matter, "No single day marks the birth of the song

... no single person is its author, no single performance was the 'first.' Rather, "We Shall Overcome" is the product of many voices singing similar songs over many years, in many places" (p. 28). [ABK]

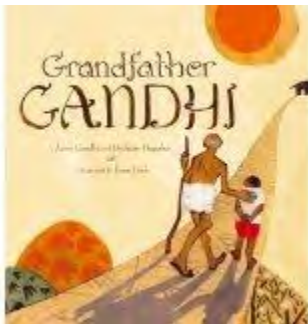


Weatherford, Carole Boston (2014). *Sugar Hill: Harlem's Historic Neighborhood*. Illus. by R. Gregory Christie. Park Ridge, IL: Albert Whitman & Company.

Through lively poetic text and brilliant illustrations, this picture book will lead readers on a historical tour of Sugar Hill. On every page, readers will meet famous African American artists (Faith Ringgold), performers (Lena Horne), musicians (Miles Davis), and authors/activists (W.E.B. DuBois) among others. There is an extensive author's note with brief biographical information about influential writers, intellectuals, and artists whose work continues to endure and influence culture. An excellent text to launch further inquiry and to create multimodal, multigenre research projects. [MN]

Books for Intermediate Readers: 3-5

Gandhi, Arun. & Hegedus, Bethany. (2014). *Grandfather Gandhi*. Illustrated by Evan Turk. New York, NY: Atheneum Books for Young Readers.



"To live our lives as light." This is the message bestowed upon Arun Gandhi by his grandfather, Mahatma Gandhi, in India, at the age of twelve years old. And, this is the very same message that Arun, co-author of this book, would like to share with us, his readers. This personal tale, told in first person narrative, highlights Arun's inner conflict of growing up - and living up - to his grandfather's image of nonviolence and peacefulness. When he is shoved one day by a boy on the field during a soccer game, Arun, age twelve, is quick to anger and ready to strike in retaliation. Ashamed of his emotions, Arun runs to his grandfather's hut where he tells his story to Grandfather Gandhi. When Arun is finished,

Ghandi shares a provocative message with Arun: "Anger can strike, like lightning, and split a living tree in two ...Or, it can be channeled, transformed. A switch can be flipped, and it can shed light like a lamp ... Then anger can illuminate. It can turn the darkness into light." These very words transform Arun's life forever. They help him to choose the lamp over the lightning and, thus, live his life as light. He, in turn, invites each of us to do the same. Partner with *Gandhi: A March to the Sea* (2013) by Alice B. McGinty, published by Two Lions. [ABK]



Powell, Patricia Hruby. (2014). *Josephine: The Dazzling life of Josephine Baker*. Illus. by Christian Robinson. San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books.

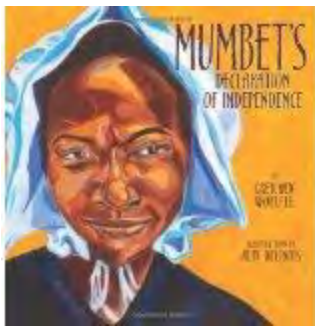
Get ready to dance! Turn the first page of this unique biography to read one of Josephine Baker's (1927) most memorable quotes: "I shall dance all my life...I would like to die, breathless, spent, at the end of a dance." Josephine Baker was a dancer, singer, and actress who initially performed

in various vaudeville acts. She relocated to Paris, France and became one of Europe's most respected and successful entertainers. Through well placed design features (i.e stage curtains) to rhythmic free verse, this unique biography pays tribute to Josephine Baker's lasting contributions as a dancer, civil rights advocate, and humanitarian. [MN]



Rockwell, Anne. (2013). *Hey, Charleston! The True Story of the Jenkins Orphanage Band*. Illus. by Colin Bootman. Minneapolis, MN: Carolrhoda Books/Lerner Publishing Group.

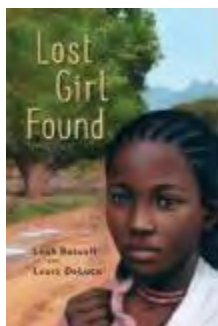
This outstanding informational picture book shares the story of a concerned pastor, Reverend Jenkins, and his mission to provide a better life to homeless African-American children. Jenkins, born a slave in South Carolina and later orphaned, established an orphanage in Charleston for children. He spearheaded the Jenkins Orphanage Band which infused the rhythms of the Gullah or Greece traditions. When the band performed, the melodious 'rag' music inspired dance and movement-soon termed as the Charleston. Many of the band members later played with Duke Ellington. The book contains an extensive author's note; it not only inspires, but presents a slice of history that would support social studies and language arts connections. [MN]



Woelfie, Gretchen. (2014). *Mumbet's Declaration of Independence*. Illus. by Alix Delinois. Minneapolis, MN: Carolrhoda Books/Lerner Publishing Group.

In 1780, Mumbet overheard the declaration of freedom and equality outlined in the Massachusetts Constitution: "All men are born free and equal." She solicited the assistance of a young lawyer, Mr. Theodore Sedgwick, and declared her independence: "I want to be free. I've got a right to be free" (26). It took over a year, but she successfully won her freedom, becoming Elizabeth Freeman. The author's note informs readers that details of Mumbet's life were scarce, yet her story serves as a powerful reminder of her dignity and courage. [MN]

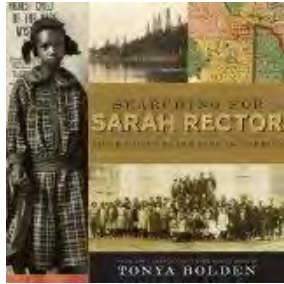
Books for Middle Grades: 6-8



Bassoff, Leah & DeLuca, Laura. (2014). *Lost Girl Found*. Toronto, ON: Groundwood/House of Anansi Press.

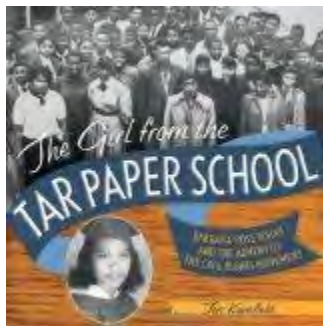
Life in Poni's village was once a place full of doing chores and going to school. As war breaks in her village, Poni heeds her mother's advice and runs toward safety. Poni's resilience, courage, and determination guide her through the difficulties of displacement. When she finally reaches a refugee camp, she is entangled into a forced marriage and subsequent dangers that cause her to escape yet again. She finds safety at a Nairobi women's shelter overseen by a nun. Will she be reunited with anyone from her family? Will she qualify for a refugee program in America? This poignant and gripping novel told through the eyes of

Poni, one of the 'lost girls' of the Sudanese conflict, is the result of the authors' mission to raise awareness of the atrocities of war, gender differences, identities, and relationships. After interviewing Sudanese women, the authors created the character of Poni in an effort to capture the resiliency of spirit, sadness, trauma, and determination of young women. Any proceeds from the novel will go to africare.org in order to improve the lives and education of girls and women. [MN]



Bolden, Tonya. (2014). *Searching for Sarah Rector: The Richest Black Girl in America*. New York, NY: Abrams Books for Young Readers.

Through impeccable research, quotes, period photographs, letters and postcards, Bolden's latest work of nonfiction introduces readers to the plight of Sarah Rector. Sarah's great-grandmother was a slave owned by the chief of the Creek tribe. When the United States government forced tribes to relocate, their slaves also made the long and arduous journey. In 1866, the government passed a mandate to free slaves of the Creeks and divided property on the Indian Territory (now known as Oklahoma) to members of the tribe and former slaves and their descendants. In 1907, Sarah Rector, at the age of five, became a landowner. The land, originally deemed useless, was rich in oil and by the time Sarah was ten years of age, she became very wealthy. Yet, this wealth caused immediate concern resulting in the appointment of guardians, who exploited the situation and pillaged earnings while children, like Sarah, lived in poor conditions. The false report of her kidnapping raised concerns about her welfare, education, and financial management. These were reiterated by W.E.B. DuBois, president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and others who advocated on behalf of these children. Bolden includes an epilogue and detailed source notes. [MN]



Kanefield, Teri. (2014). *The Girl From the Tar Paper School: Barbara Rose Johns and the Advent of the Civil Rights Movement*. New York, NY: Abrams Books for Young Readers.

Barbara Rose Johns had had enough. Sick and tired of attending school in "a tar paper shack" - she devised a plan to call attention to the inequitable conditions of her school. Unbeknownst to her, it was a plan which would set into motion the fight to change 'separate but equal' - forever. Set in Farmville, Virginia in 1950, this true story of a 15-year-old girl highlights her actions as she rallied classmates and community members to strike a protest against her school, Moton High, in demand that a new one be built. Joined by the NAACP, her three-day strike escalates from a position of wanting 'equality in schools' to a position demanding 'full integration of schools.' Written as a biography and flavored with historical artifacts throughout, this is a story of a fight not just for equal facilities for Blacks and Whites. But, a fight toward ending segregated facilities all together. In fact, the case of the Moton High in Virginia - coupled with similar cases from around the country - formed the bases for the historic case, *Brown vs. Board of Education*, which overturned the 'separate but equal' doctrine and declared segregation in schools unconstitutional. Pre Ruby Bridges, Rosa Parks, and Martin Luther King, the story of Barbara Johns is one to be shared and remembered. [ABK]

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Ann Berger-Knorr is an Associate Professor of Education at Lebanon Valley College where she teaches undergraduate literacy courses in the early childhood education and special education programs. She can be reached at: aberger@lvc.edu

Mary Napoli is an Associate Professor of Reading at Penn State Harrisburg where she teaches courses in children's/adolescent literature. She can be reached at: mxn130@psu.edu