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LIS 5566

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Toolkit

This toolkit will serve to help me in my library career by acting as a working document that I will add to and amend as needed as I find new resources. Putting links and reviews together in one place will help to give me a starting point anytime I need to evaluate books for a collection or for a featured event or display.

### ***Part A: Commitment to Diversity***

Representation matters to everyone (Bishop, "Mirrors"). In 1965, Nancy Larrick wrote about representation, and noted, "There seems little chance of developing the humility so urgently needed for world cooperation, instead of world conflict, as long as our children are brought up on gentle doses of racism through their books" (Larrick, 63). Currently, we are in the middle of a great deal of conflict, politically, socially, and even medically. This is in direct opposition to two values I hold quite dear- cooperation and empathy.

I see it as my responsibility and also my duty to use my own privilege to fight against this division caused by overrepresentation for white patrons. Being a white, cisgender female, I have seen representation in every nook and cranny of my existence. No one needs to advocate for white representation in books- it is the majority by a wide margin (Dahlen, "Picture This"). But considering the quote above, that is a huge problem in our society.

And when less than 10% of the books coming out in a given year are representative of a child's identity or culture, knowing that the library must pick and choose and can't buy every book that is published, how many actually make it to the shelves? Do we expect those kids to be content, much less well-served, with a handful of representative books? I don't see how that is possible, given that children ages 6-11 read an average of about 33 books per year (Shapiro, "Ordinary Kids").

As a librarian, I have a responsibility to ensure that all of our patrons are represented in our materials, events, and communications. I commit to expanding event planning to include more than just the 5 Fs of a culture (Naidoo, "The Importance of Diversity"). I will use these as supplementary examples and educational elements instead of primary elements.

Additionally, I will seek out representative books and materials for our patrons as well as weed out materials that may showcase harmful stereotypes or include casual racism. It is my duty to

stay informed about what books are available and I plan to use websites such as the Anti-Defamation League, We Need Diverse Books, and Multicultural Children's Book Day, all of which evaluate and recommend diverse books. Also, I consider seeking out new resources as part of my continuing education in this field. Learning happens every day.

Bishop, Rudine Sims. "Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors." *YouTube*, uploaded by Reading Rockets, 30 January 2015,  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=AAu58SNSyc&list=PLxwDwKxHx1yLH9i0wFT21xxYSSMjS4KGi&index=5](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AAu58SNSyc&list=PLxwDwKxHx1yLH9i0wFT21xxYSSMjS4KGi&index=5).

Dahlen, Sarah Park. *Sarah Park Wordpress*, "Picture This: Diversity in Children's Books 2018 Infographic." <https://readingspark.wordpress.com/2019/06/19/picture-this-diversity-in-childrens-books-2018-infographic/> . Accessed 8 September 2021.

Larrick, Nancy. "The All-White World of Children's Books." *The Saturday Review*, 11 September 1965, pp. 63-85.

Naidoo, Jamie Campbell. "The Importance of Diversity in Library Programs and Material Collections for Children." The Association for Library Service to Children, 5 April 2014.

Shapiro, Jordan. *Forbes*, "Ordinary Kids Read as Infrequently as Ordinary Adults: Less Than 5 Books Per Year." [www.forbes.com/sites/jordanshapiro/2015/01/30/ordinary-kids-read-as-infrequently-as-ordinary-adults-less-than-5-books-per-year/?sh=5414341e49f1](http://www.forbes.com/sites/jordanshapiro/2015/01/30/ordinary-kids-read-as-infrequently-as-ordinary-adults-less-than-5-books-per-year/?sh=5414341e49f1) . Accessed 8 September 2021.

## ***Part B: Resources (five sections)***

### **African-American Literature for Youth**

- **Case-study**

Williams-Garcia, Rita. *One Crazy Summer*. Amistad. 2010.

#### Summary

At the prompting of their father, three girls fly from their home in New York out to California to meet the mother who left them behind several years before. The month-long visit is nothing like they expected. The clash of cultures and people, even within their mother's house, opens their eyes to a new worldview, and they all come out of the experience learning a lot more than they expected.

## Cultural Analysis

Examining the literary quality of the book *One Crazy Summer* is, frankly, quite easy. It is well-paced, high-quality writing that sets the scene vividly enough that the reader has no problems keeping track of who is who and what is happening. Williams-Garcia has insider status as the writer, and because she was also an 11-year-old black girl who lived in New York during the timeframe in which the book takes place, the point of view of the main character is very clear and complete. Through the end notes in the book, we learn that she had personal experience with the Black Panther party in her community when she was a child, and those interactions were not what was largely portrayed in the news at the time. What we see in the book is in line with her own observations and experiences. Also, in the acknowledgements, she referenced David Hilliard's *The Black Panther Intercommunal News Service*, making this not only an insider account, but also a researched account of what was happening within the Black Panther party at the time. The book reflects her experiences as well as her research.

Evaluating the language component in the book, to the best of my knowledge, it feels realistic and not exaggerated or stereotypical/mockingly. There were some expressions that came up a few times, like "in a boiling pot of trouble cooking" (pg. 5, 20, 135) and the way they were presented felt very natural. Code switching was also briefly acknowledged on page 52 when Delphine steps in to calm a situation between Fern and Cecile and Delphine says "Then I put on my 'talking to white folks' voice and said, 'Can you get her a glass of cold water?'" Otherwise, I felt that the language of the book felt so natural in general that I found myself not noticing it. The back-and-forth conversations between the sisters really read accurately, and you could almost hear their voices because of that. One great example is on page 91-92 when the girls are fighting about taking up for each other. In this book, we also get to witness when Delphine shifted from saying "a grand Negro spectacle" on page 2 to saying "a grand Negro, well, a grand black spectacle" on page 192. In the first instance, it was conveyed with embarrassment, but on page 192, it was conveyed with pride. It was a very clear instance of seeing how Delphine's mindset changed based on what she experienced that summer.

The characters in this book most definitely were complex, growing beings. All of the characters felt, to me, very thoughtfully presented and multi-dimensional. No one character is all good or all bad, just like in life. There was a bit of stereotyping happening, though, with Cecile living a bohemian lifestyle as a poet after running off to California. She doesn't have many belongings and doesn't like to conform to what society wants from her. She has even changed her name. But she is far from a flat character. In fact, this book flips the stereotype completely with Delphine, Vonetta, and Fern living with their single dad and having had their mother run off.

My favorite character, though, was always going to be Delphine. As the oldest of the three girls, she takes on the motherly role to her sisters for the entire trip, starting on the plane ride there. But I think my favorite part of the book happens on pages 100 and 154, where we glimpse how very much Delphine still holds on to who she is. She is experiencing revolution in

California (on the entire other side of the country from where she lives) in a Black Panther summer camp program. She is living with her estranged mother with whom she has complex feelings and interactions. She is thrust into a new level of independence. And yet- on pages 100 and 154, we see that she is still thinking about writing her “what I did this summer” essay and what they could do that would make for a really good paper. It’s the smallest detail, but it tells us so much about Delphine and I love it. Most kids don’t think about school work in the middle of summer. I also love how completely we see Delphine’s pride- from her declaration of not “making messes” when she cooks on page 106 and her pride in her knife skills in the kitchen that Big Ma taught her on page 107 to her “girl pride” making her lie about her feelings for a boy on page 113.

The cultural background in this book appears to be solidly accurate. DeFremery Park on Adeline Street, which is specifically mentioned early in the book (pg. 57), today has a “Bobby Hutton Grove” and all of the people named in the lessons given to the girls at the People’s Center did exist and the information given about them is accurate. The depiction of Bobby Hutton as the first member of the Black Panther party, the account of how he was killed by police at the young age of only 17- all of it is true. The reaction that Delphine has to learning about that was heartbreakingly real- anger and fear and the horrific realization that this story she heard on the news a few months ago was from someone not much older than her, who lived among the people she now knew. It became very real for her in that way.

I think the most surprising part of the book was that these people who had at once shared a home, were so vastly different in lifestyle after only a few years. In New York, Delphine and her sisters each have a Timex watch, nice shoes, and are flown across the country, given \$200 to use during their stay. They envision going to Disneyland and the beach. They are accustomed to home cooked meals and a taxi ride did not feel out of place for them. Now, \$200 for 3 kids for a month of spending money may not seem like much to a reader today, but in context, that would have been the equivalent of over \$1200 in cash handed over to an 11-year-old at the time this was published\*. This is a solidly middle class family. They didn’t spend frivolously, evidenced by their grandmother’s scolding when they called collect to speak with their father on page 39. But they clearly did live comfortably.

Meanwhile, Cecile had a house but very little furniture or housewares. She took a taxi for only the distance needed to get to the bus stop, and she took the effort to argue with the bus driver to get the transfer slips she needed for kids under 10, because they would ride free (pg 21) even though Delphine was 11. Cecile also split their purchased single meal from Ming’s four ways, even after being given the \$200 in cash from Delphine. And instead of Disneyland and adventures, Cecile sent them to the Center every day, knowing they would be fed in the process. I think it’s important to note that at the time, a child’s ticket to Disneyland was \$3.50, so it was a fully reasonable expectation for the girls to have had.

\*I used an online inflation calculator to determine

## Conclusion

I would recommend this book for any age group that is old enough to understand the words. The back of the book shows a recommendation for ages 9-12, but I think that is quite limiting. While the level of the book is written for that age range, I think the story contained within would be beneficial for anyone to hear. Beyond just the basic level of expanding worldview by hearing stories from other people, it reframes the Black Panther party and the narrative that was/is held by a lot of people who were not a part of that movement at the time.

- **List of resources: artists (authors and illustrators,) awards, organizations, experts, websites, publishers, and recommended books.**

## *Authors*

- Kwame Alexander
- Ashley Bryan
- Bryan Collier
- R. Gregory Christie
- Christopher Paul Curtis
- Leo and Diane Dillon
- Sharon Draper
- Nikki Giovanni
- Nikki Grimes
- Virginia Hamilton
- Julius Lester
- E. B. Lewis
- Kekla Magoon
- Patricia McKissack
- Christopher Myers
- Walter Dean Myers
- Kadir Nelson
- Marilyn Nelson
- Andrea Pinkney
- Jerry Pinkney
- Jason Reynolds
- Christian Robinson
- Javaka Steptoe
- John Steptoe
- Mildred Taylor
- Rita Williams-Garcia
- Jacqueline Woodson

## *Awards*

Black Caucus of the ALA Children's and YA Literary Awards, [www.bcala.org/the-black-caucus-of-ala-launches-children-ya-literary-awards-sponsored-by-slj](http://www.bcala.org/the-black-caucus-of-ala-launches-children-ya-literary-awards-sponsored-by-slj)

Coretta Scott King Book Awards, <https://olos.ala.org/csk/>

John Steptoe Award, [www.ala.org/rt/emiert/cskbookawards/johnsteptoe](http://www.ala.org/rt/emiert/cskbookawards/johnsteptoe)

Langston Hughes Medal, [www.ccnycunyu.edu/lhf](http://www.ccnycunyu.edu/lhf)

NAACP Image Awards, Literary, <https://naacpimageawards.net/2021-nominees/#nominee-category-literary>

Scott O'Dell Award, <https://scottodell.com/the-scott-odell-award>

## *Reviews and other resources*

The Black Book Review, [www.qbrbookreview.com/](http://www.qbrbookreview.com/)

Edith Campbell's blog: Crazy Quilt Edi, <https://crazyquiltedi.blog/>

The African American Children's Books Project,  
<https://theafricanamericanchildrensbookproject.org>

The Brown Bookshelf, <https://thebrownbookshelf.com/>

McNair, J. C., & Brooks, W. M. (2008). *Embracing, evaluating, and examining African American children's and young adult literature*. Lanham, Md. : Scarecrow Press, 2008.

Reflections on Black Children's Literature, [www.hbook.com/story/reflections-black-childrens-literature-historical-perspective](http://www.hbook.com/story/reflections-black-childrens-literature-historical-perspective)

Why 'Identity-Based' Awards are Important, [www.hbook.com/story/letters-to-the-editor-from-septemberoctober-2001-vhe](http://www.hbook.com/story/letters-to-the-editor-from-septemberoctober-2001-vhe)

- **Your "Top 5 Books" list.**

### **1. The Book Itch by Vaunda Micheaux Nelson**

*Coretta Scott King Illustrator Honor, ALA Notable Children's Book, CCBC Best Children's Book of the Year, Jane Addams Children's Book Award, Kirkus Best Children's Books, NCTE Notable*

In addition to the awards this book has won, it is written by a relative (niece or grand-niece?) of the owner of the bookstore featured, so her perspective is a very unique and important one. Before she wrote this book, she researched and wrote a more extensive biography of Lewis Michaux called *No Crystal Stair*. I feel that this book is also important because it spotlights an important cultural institution that inspired many and the man who built that bookstore from nothing, and both the bookstore and the man who made it are not widely known today. It's a story that needs to be shared and known.

CCBC - by and about

## **2. Don't Touch My Hair** by Sharee Miller

*ALA Children's Notable Book*

This book, while not *as* award-winning as some other books, is noted on Amazon as being a "teachers' pick" book. The main theme is consent and boundary setting, which is a valuable thing to empower kids of any group to recognize and understand.

CCBC - by and about

## **3. If You Were a Kid During the Civil Rights Movement** by Gwendolyn Hooks

I chose this book because from my experience at the branch, I know that most kids LOVE the books that put them "in" a situation, like the "I Survived" series of books. They help historical events become more than words on a page as they can imagine what it would be like to experience what happened. Because this is a familiar concept, kids of all backgrounds can envision what it would be like to walk in someone else's shoes during a time that really wasn't that long ago.

CCBC - by and about

## **4. The Crossover** by Kwame Alexander

*Newbery Medal, Coretta Scott King Award, Washington Post best book, Publishers Weekly best book, School Library Journal best book, Kirkus Reviews best book, ALA Notable book, Lee Bennett Hopkins Poetry award winner, Paterson Prize, NYPL best book, Chicago Public Library best book*

Books written in verse are increasing in popularity and frequency, so this book, while award-winning, is also likely to catch the attention of young readers based on its style. Several reviews that I have seen mention that while the theme clearly has basketball in it, that you don't need to love basketball to love this book.

CCBC - by and about

## **5. Twins** by Varian Johnson

*National Indie Bestseller, Junior Library Guild Selection, NPR Best Book, Washington Post Best Children's Book, Kirkus Reviews Best Book, Horn Book Best Book, School Library Journal Best Book, Booklist Best Book for Youth, Barnes & Noble Best Book, Today.com Best Book for Kids, Tweens, and Teens, Nerdist Best Comic, Chicago Public Library Best Book, University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education Best Book for Young Readers, CCBC Best Book, Bank Street College of Education Best Children's Book*

The list of awards this book has won is impressive to say the least. Because this list of awards includes so many different types of awards, it seems that the appeal of the content is fairly universal. It's a 'middle school experience' book, and while I have not read it myself, what I can see online shows a very relatable premise for this age group. There may be some cultural representation here, but that does not appear to be the main theme.

CCBC- by and not about

#### **6. One Crazy Summer** by Rita Williams-Garcia

*Coretta Scott King Award, Newbery Honor Book, Scott O'Dell Award for Historical Fiction, National Book Award Finalist*

This book was just such a fantastic read that is so very relatable to today's world that I had to also put this on my list of books. I am adding it as a #6 because I want to be clear that I am not just adding it to make my list complete. I just really think it is a valuable addition to any library. My justification is clear in my evaluation of it, but also, it's multiple award-winning and showcases several viewpoints on relations between many different cultures.

CCBC- by and about

### **Native-American**

- **Case-study (your book evaluation.)**

Smith, Cynthia Leitich. *Hearts Unbroken*. Candlewick Press, 2018.

#### **SUMMARY:**

Because Lou writes for her high school newspaper, she finds herself meeting lots of people for her stories. As she navigates her senior year, she has to deal with different identities- hers and others'- making already complicated relationships (familial, professional, romantic, friend) even more complex. Amid all of it, her family is receiving threatening messages from an anonymous source.

#### **ANALYSIS:**

Cynthia Leitich Smith is writing from an insider perspective, as she is an enrolled citizen of the Muscogee Indian Nation. Because of this, she has a wealth of personal experience to draw from when crafting these characters and also what they experience. The absolutely overwhelming number of racist comments and actions that the characters endure as a part of everyday life (genuinely, too many to list page numbers here...it starts on page 6 and goes through to page 247), while technically part of the fiction of the story, I have no doubt happened to either the author or someone they know.

The language in the book was not too far removed from what I would consider universal, aside from the Muscogee words sprinkled throughout, and also the use of the term "Stu-Co" which appears about a dozen times in the book. I had never heard this term used to refer to student council, so I don't know if it's widely used or if it's something younger people would be more familiar with. For the Muscogee words presented within the story, each time they came up, the reader is given context, but I still felt the need to pause my reading, flip to the back to check the definition, and then jump back into the story. Some readers might be frustrated by that and by the fact that we don't also get a pronunciation guide for the words and phrases learned along the way.

As I am tending to notice in YA books in general, the character development reflects a great deal of learning and growth for the main character. She learns how hard it is to be judged for a misunderstanding, and she grows by being a better friend to Shelby by being more aware of the challenges other people face, and she even starts to realize that her own knowledge of other cultures had a few gaps that could use some education (pg. 281).

This book will be relatable to a lot of readers because the lifestyle aspect is very solidly middle class, so a step up or down the socioeconomic ladder isn't a far stretch. Lou seems comfortable in the country club setting/party she goes to on page 4, where she also mentions that she is "*middle middle class*". On page 201, she compares her subdivision with the old town neighborhood, noting the clotheslines, above ground pools, vegetable gardens, and mentions that they clearly don't have an HOA to regulate these things. This isn't stated with a negative tone, but she is definitely making a comparison.

Regarding historical accuracies, the running story throughout the book of L. Frank Baum writing racist rants against Native Americans was, sadly, very true and easily verifiable. For me, this was kind of hard to read, because I have loved the Oz books (at least, the six books I have) since I was quite young. This part of the story is absolutely essential to keep in the book because there are likely so many others like me who just did not know this about Baum.

As for the cultural settings and traditions of the Muscogee Nation represented in this book, such as Lou's reading of her official tribal newspaper and listening to Native America Calling (pg 85), both of these exist in real life. On page 15, Lou mentions the Mvskoke Fest in Okmulgee, which is an annual free festival that happens, though it was cancelled due to covid this year.

There is also the very current cultural component of a parent group masquerading as helpful but actually being very problematic. The PART (Parents Against Revisionist Theater) group thankfully is not something that exists in our current reality, but I don't think it's a stretch to have this group in the book. It's a really well constructed part of the book, because they are not portrayed as purely evil villains. In fact, on page 96, we see quotes from an interview with the founder of the group saying very agreeable things when they are not taken in context. For instance "It's trying to fix old discrimination with new discrimination instead of moving forward" doesn't actually sound terrible. Because it acknowledges that discrimination was happening, you almost think she's standing up for whoever is most talented to get the part. But of course, the further we go, the more references she makes to "traditional" casting and "reverse racism" which, of course, is not a thing. This is such an accurate representation of how groups like this operate.

#### CONCLUSION:

I would definitely recommend this book for 8th grade and up. There are a lot of points in the book that younger readers would become frustrated by, because of the lack of clear communication between the characters. Younger readers might not understand the complexities of why teens aren't fully transparent in their conversations. Beyond the mere mechanics of the book, I think it's a great glimpse into how difficult it can be for teenagers to be the idealized person they want to be, even when they are trying hard. For instance, Lou doesn't think it's possible that she's a bad friend or that someone's words don't mean what they come out as- until she faces both scenarios head on. There is a lot of experiential learning happening in many of the characters- it's not just Lou that learns.

- **List of resources: artists (authors and illustrators,) awards, organizations, experts, websites, publishers, and recommended books.**

#### *Authors*

- Shonto Begay (Navajo)
- Angelline Boulley (Sault Ste. Marie Chippewa)
- Joseph Bruchac (Abenaki)
- Louise Erdrich (Turtle Mountain Chippewa)
- Christine Day (Upper Skagit)
- Eric Gansworth (Onondaga)
- Joy Harjo (Mvskoke)
- Michael Lacapa (Apache, Hopi)
- Carole Lindstrom (Turtle Mountain Chippewa)
- Darcie Little Badger (Lipan Apache)
- George Littlechild (Plains Cree)

- Dawn Quigley (Turtle Mountain Ojibwe)
- Leslie Marmon Silko (Laguna)
- Cynthia Leitich Smith (Mvscogee Creek)
- Tim Tingle (Chocktaw)
- Traci Sorell (Cherokee)

### *Awards*

American Indian Youth Literature Award, <https://ailanet.org/activities/american-indian-youth-literature-award/>

Woodcraft Circle of Native Writers and Storytellers Award, [www.wordcraftcircle.org/](http://www.wordcraftcircle.org/)

### *Reviews and other resources*

Dr. Debbie Reese: American Indians in Children's Literature, <https://americanindiansinchildrensliterature.blogspot.com/>

Hirschfelder, A., Molin, P. F., & Wakim, Y. (1999). *American Indian stereotypes in the world of children*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press.

Reese, D. (2018). Critical indigenous literacies: Selecting and using children's books about indigenous peoples. *Language Arts*, 95(6), 389-393.

Slapin, B., & Seale, D. (2005). *A broken flute: The Native experience in books for children*. Walnut Creek, CA: Oyate

York, S. (2003). *Children's and young adult literature by Native Americans : a guide for librarians, teachers, parents, and students*. Worthington, Ohio: Linworth Pub., c2003.

### • **Your "Top 5 Books" list.**

#### **1. Rez Dogs** by Joseph Bruchac

Bruchac, of the Abenaki tribe, has written several highly-regarded books, but I chose this one because of the specific content. Because it takes place during the covid pandemic, I think young readers will relate to this book in a strong way, and that it will provide an excellent 'window' for them.

CCBC- By and about

#### **2. Chukfi Rabbit's Big Bad Bellyache** by Greg Rodgers, illustrated by Leslie Stall Widener

The author, of the Choctaw tribe, stumbled across this traditional story and he reworked it as a contemporary book, incorporating Choctaw words as names for the animals. Also, on the AICL page, Dr. Reese points out that the illustrations accurately portray Choctaw culture, such as the design of the clothes.

CCBC- By and about

3. **Chia and the Fox Man** by Barbara and Ethan Atwater (mother and son team), illustrated by Mindy Dwyer

This book was written by a mother and her son, who are both Alaskan Dena'ina people of the Athabascan tribe. The book uses occasional Dena'ina words with the definition put at the bottom of the page, and includes a pronunciation guide in the back of the book as well. Additionally, there is a list of other books for more reading about the Dena'ina people on the last page. I chose this book not only for the excellent resources it provides, and the background of the Dena'ina people, but also because it's a beautiful picture book and sure to be picked up time and time again, even by readers who are not seeking out indigenous stories.

CCBC- By and about

4. **Give Me Some Truth** by Eric Gansworth

This book made the AICL Best Books list in 2018. Set in the 1980s with high schoolers, it deals with themes like bullying, racism, and everyday teenager stuff. One reason it made the AICL list is because it pushes the reader to do more digging. For instance, there is talk of the Porter Agreement at Niagara Falls and while most indigenous folks understand what that is, a lot of readers will be totally unaware, so they will go to Google and learn something new. Gansworth is a member of the Onondaga Nation.

CCBC- By and about

5. **The Wolf's Trail: An Ojibwe Story, Told by Wolves** by Thomas D. Peacock

This book was an AICL Best Book for 2020, and reviews all over seem to be positively glowing. The words "profound" and "beautiful" are mentioned in several reviews, which certainly stands out for a middle-grade level book. The concept will intrigue young readers, and the wolf tells traditional Ojibwe stories. Also, as one reviewer noted, the Ojibwe words that are woven into the stories are used and explained several times in different ways throughout the book, so that by the time you're done with the book, you have internalized their meaning, which I think is pretty cool.

CCBC- By and about

## **Latino/Caribbean-American Literature for Youth**

- **Case-study (your book evaluation.)**

Acevedo, Elizabeth. *The Poet X*. HarperTeen, 2018.

#### SUMMARY

Xiomara and her twin brother go to different schools, and are each experiencing their first love relationship. Their mother is deeply religious, and enforces many rules and lots of time at mass each week. Since she is personally questioning her own faith, this feels constricting to Xiomara, and she uses poetry to safely let out all her complicated emotions.

#### ANALYSIS

There is so much to talk about in this book and I feel like I could go on and on and on about it- I really enjoyed the read in addition to appreciating it as a great piece to have in a diverse collection.

The most glaringly obvious facet that caught my attention was language. This book is about a Dominican teen and she peppers her thoughts with Spanish words from the first page. Some are clearly explained while others are left for the reader to figure out with context or look up for themselves. But regardless of the actual meaning of the word, the meaning of what is being said is never unclear. Only one of the entries is entirely in Spanish, but it is translated on the following page. Acevedo gives Xiomara a very real voice which feels entirely authentic, both culturally and age-wise.

Through the book, we read some of her school assignments, and we see her code switch from her melodious thoughts to something more stiff and guarded. The clearest example of this is on page 180. She does switch back halfway through the assignment when she talks about Nicki Minaj and how she's "got bars" but almost immediately goes back to the more formal writing style. Since this is what she turns in to her teacher, I have to imagine that Ms. Galiano was absolutely blown away when Xiomara finally shared one of her pieces in poetry club.

On page 301, it feels like the floor drops out from underneath you as you are there with Xiomara, in her room, and for the next 13 pages, as the notebook is burned and everything unfolds. In a book written in verse, where whole scenes happen in a stanza, we have more than a dozen pages devoted to this one event, which feels very accurate. When a traumatic event happens, many people say that it felt like time was standing still, that something felt like hours when it was only moments. This was the perfect way to capture this event.

In this book, I think the character development and cultural background elements are really well woven in to the story. We learn that Xiomara has been sneaking around to see Aman because she knows that the rules are different for her and for her twin brother because she's a girl. On page 40, we see that her mother smacks her when she asks for help with tampons because no one has talked with her about this (we know because she says she had to google it),

and that she's told that good girls don't use tampons. She bears the responsibility of helping with chores at home simply because she's the girl- her brother would not get in trouble for not helping with laundry or dishes. So it's well established that this family is strict, traditionally religious, and reinforces gender stereotypes. Xiomara's act of rebellion is public kissing, which her mother happens to see. I think a lot of teens reading the book would be shocked at how strongly her mother reacts to this. But Xiomara isn't surprised at all.

On page 229, Father Sean tells Xiomara's mother that "anger is as much a sin as any Xiomara may have committed" and while the reader is likely thinking "yes! She's overreacting here and someone needs to tell her," Xiomara wonders if that was helpful or if it made things worse.

When it comes to lifestyle elements throughout the book, we get some clues about the family's socioeconomic status, but it's not necessarily clearly defined. For instance, they seem to use public transportation, but they live in New York, so that's not a clear sign. While she and her brother give each other modest gifts, they're young teens with no jobs, so that also isn't an indicator. Xiomara goes to public high school and her brother goes to a private high school. Her mother works cleaning office buildings in Queens, while they live in Harlem, where Xiomara says the walls in their apartment are "flimsy" but apartments in general are often described that way. That said, the criteria we are using to evaluate these books even specifies "Hispanic maid" as a stereotypical role, so this is not something we can ignore. However, because the author is writing from an insider standpoint as a Dominican American herself who also lives in New York, I don't view this as a reason to pass on this book or to criticize the choice. It does seem to fit the whole character and the family dynamic portrayed here, as we learn early in the book about her mother's traditional upbringing.

## CONCLUSION

While this book is written in verse, it is a quick read, but that doesn't mean it can't pack a punch. What Acevedo is able to achieve in fewer words is astounding. Even being myself so far removed from being a teenager, I found it very relatable, and I was so invested in Xiomara's journey. The book is listed as being written for ages 13-17, which spans middle school and high school, and I agree with the age recommendation, though I would not cap the age range. In fact, I'm in a reading challenge group and I heartily recommended this book to the group, which is comprised entirely of adults well over the age of 17. The notebook burning scene was like a modern day take on Louisa May Alcott's manuscript burning scene from *Little Women*, but in today's very digital world still feels relevant.

- **List of resources: artists (authors and illustrators,) awards, organizations, experts, websites, publishers, and recommended books.**

### *Authors and Illustrators*

- Elizabeth Acevedo
- Alma Flor Ada
- Julia Alvarez
- Jorge Argueta
- Monica Brown
- Isabel Campoy
- Joe Cepeda
- Angela Cervantes
- Veronica Chambers
- Sandra Cisneros
- Judith Ortiz Cofer
- Raul Colón
- Carmen Agra Deedy
- Lulu Delacre
- David Díaz
- Angela Dominguez
- Margarita Engle
- Xavier Garza
- Christina Díaz González
- Lucía M. González
- Carmen T. Bernier-Grand
- Susan Guevara
- Francisco Jiménez
- René Colato Laínez
- Rafael López
- Meg Medina
- Marisa Montes
- Pat Mora
- Yuyi Morales
- Sara Palacios
- John Parra
- Celia C. Pérez
- Pam Muñoz Ryan
- Benjamín Alire Sáenz
- Gary Soto
- Francisco X. Stork
- Carmen Tafolla
- Duncan Tonatiuh
- Eric Velazquez

## *Awards*

Americas Award, [www.claspprograms.org/americasaward](http://www.claspprograms.org/americasaward)

Pura Belpré Award, [www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/belpré](http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/belpré)

Tomas Rivera Award, [www.education.txstate.edu/ci/riverabookaward/](http://www.education.txstate.edu/ci/riverabookaward/)

## *Reviews and other resources*

Anansem, [www.anansem.com/](http://www.anansem.com/) (Caribbean)

De Colores, <https://decoloresreviews.blogspot.com>

DIA, <https://dia.ala.org/>

The Hispanic Reader (archive site), <https://hispanicreader.com>

Imaginense Libros, <https://imaginenselibros.blogspot.com/>

Latin Baby Book Club, [www.latinbabybookclub.com](http://www.latinbabybookclub.com)

Latin@s in Kid Lit, <https://latinosinkidlit.com>

Meg Medina's blog, <https://megmedina.com>

Pat More's blog, [www.patmora.com/blog](http://www.patmora.com/blog)

Vamos a Leer, <https://teachinglatinamericathroughliterature.wordpress.com>

Clark, E.R., Flores, B. B., Smith, H. L. & Gonzalez, D. A. (2015). *Multicultural literature for Latino bilingual children: Their words, their worlds*. Roman & Littlefield.

- **Your "Top 5 Books" list.**

*(All books on my list were Pura Belpré award winners)*

1. **Sal & Gabi Break the Universe** by Carlos Hernandez

The reviews I have seen online are overwhelmingly very good. Cuban influenced science fiction for middle grades, Kirkus Reviews notes the “multiple intersectionalities” contained within.

CCBC: by and about

2. **Enchanted Air** by Margarita Engle

Historical fiction set in the 1960s around the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis and how it affected a girl whose family was in Cuba while she was in the United States. This author is recommended by Vamos a Leer. This book is also given a glowing recommendation by the School Library Journal.

CCBC: by and about

### 3. **I Lived on Butterfly Hill** by Marjorie Agosin

This book also mirrors the author's life experiences somewhat. Another historical fiction book, this Belpre winner is set in Chile in the 1970s before and after the Chilean coup, through the eyes of an 11-year-old who was sent to the United States because of the conflict.

CCBC: by and about

### 4. **Efrén Divided** by Ernesto Cisneros

This story is very relevant to what's happening in our country at the Mexican border and from the audiobook sample I was able to hear, it is an authentic representation, and does incorporate many cultural lifestyle details within the story.

CCBC: by and about

### 5. **Under the Mesquite** by Guadalupe Garcia McCall

This author is recommended on the Vamos a Leer website. Amazon shows the book as a "teacher's pick" and reviews there mention that it's a universal coming of age story, but through the lens of a Mexican-American girl. It's also written in free verse, which is becoming much more popular.

CCBC: by and about

## **Asian/Pacific-American and/or Middle Eastern**

- **Case-study (your book evaluation.)**

Choi, Yangsook. *The Name Jar*, Dragonfly Books, 2001.

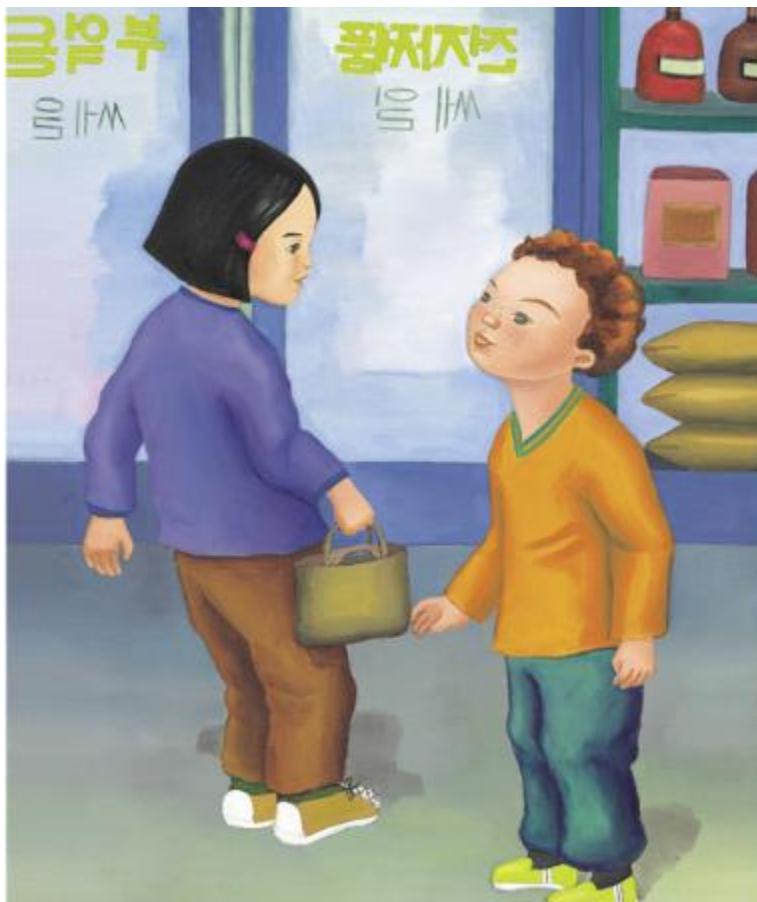
### **SUMMARY**

Unhei is a girl who has just moved to New York from Korea. When she is asked to introduce herself to the class, she makes the decision to wait and figure out what she would like to be called. Her new classmates try to help her with name suggestions.

### **ANALYSIS**

This book is written with an insider's perspective, as is noted on the back cover of the book. Choi, the author and illustrator of the book, was also born in Korea and moved to New York. All the content within does appear authentic. Also throughout the book, all intent appears to be positive regarding culture portrayal.

The illustrations are lovely and well balanced through the story, sometimes giving a more simple/breakout look and other times, portraying a whole scene with all the details. The color palette being very nature-inspired made for a nice complement to the story being told. The illustrations of the children showed a diverse classroom that one would expect to find in any given suburban or urban elementary school. And around Unhei's home and in Kim's Market, we see a few wall hangings or signs with Korean writing- they are a part of the normal background elements- not showcased, but something that fits comfortably with the surroundings.



That said, I think the story can make for a bit of a 'cloudy window' for kids of different backgrounds. When Unhei is on the bus, she shares her name. When she goes to the classroom, she announces that she hasn't decided on a name yet. But the reader knows that she already does have a name. That part isn't really explained to the reader, nor does it seem like something the family in the book would have discussed. When Unhei comes home and announces that she wants an American name, her mother's reaction seems to be one of

surprise. To a child who is in a similar situation, there may be no confusion there. But to anyone else, more explanation would go a long way here.

While some of the cultural elements in the book are of the 5 Fs variety- none of which are out of place or exaggerated, but still worth noting, such as the grandmother's clothing at the airport and the foods they purchase at Kim's Market- cabbage for kimchi and also seaweed, there is far more presented. Obviously, these center around her name. First we see the name stamp that is presented to Unhei before her family leaves Korea. We also hear about how her mother consulted a name master for her name, and how it means grace. This gives the clear indication to any reader that names are important in this culture.



For the most part, I feel that lifestyle elements are accurately portrayed. One part that bothered me as a parent that a child may or may not get stuck on was that we don't know how old Unhei is in this book, but she appears to be on the younger side. The illustrations suggest elementary school, though. As a parent, if I had a child going to a brand-new school in a brand-new country, I would not just stick them on a bus and hope for the best, though. Perhaps it is culturally more accurate for a Korean family to do this? I tried to look for an answer to this, but wasn't able to locate anything definitive.

In terms of language, the word "fuller" is used to describe the jar as more names are added. Language does adapt and change over time, exemplified by the now-recognized irregular word "irregardless". But as of right now, fuller is just not considered a word that means "more full" and because picture books target ages of children who are developing language skills, this gives

me pause. We do, however, learn the Korean word for friend (Chinku) and also how to correctly pronounce Unhei's name.

Another interesting choice is having the white boy try to steer her into a decision, even though it is not his decision to make. He flat-out stole the name jar to prevent her from getting more name choices. And I'd argue that he's appropriating her culture when he gets his own name stamp. She was presented hers by an elder relative in a meaningful moment. He went to a store and asked for a nickname and bought a stamp. That whole part just felt wrong to me.

## CONCLUSION

While I would recommend this as a fun book to have/read, I would not put it on a must-have list. It is listed as being for ages 3-7, which I think is an age range that is appropriate for this book. Overall, it's a positive representation of Korean culture, but I feel like there are a few places where this book could be expanded and more story told/explained to provide a better 'window' to others.

- **List of resources: artists (authors and illustrators,) awards, organizations, experts, websites, publishers, and recommended books.**

### *Authors*

- Linda Sue Park (Korea)
- Grace Lin (Taiwan)
- Laurence Yep (China)
- Naomi Shihab Nye (Palestine)
- Minh Lê (Vietnam)
- Dan Santat (Thailand)
- Uma Krishnaswami (India)
- Bao Phi (Vietnam)
- Erin Entrada Kelly (Philippines)
- Justina Chen (Taiwan)
- Demi (not #OwnVoices, but lived in India, wrote many books)

### *Awards*

Asian/Pacific American Award for Literature (APALA), [www.apalaweb.org/awards/literature-awards](http://www.apalaweb.org/awards/literature-awards)

CALA Best Book Award, [www.cala-web.org/node/881](http://www.cala-web.org/node/881)

Kundiman Poetry Prize, <https://kundiman.org/prize>

Middle East Book Awards, [www.meoc.us/book-awards.html](http://www.meoc.us/book-awards.html)

South Asia Book Award, <https://southasiabookaward.wisc.edu>

#### *Reviews and other resources*

Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association (APALA), [www.apalaweb.org](http://www.apalaweb.org)

Association of Jewish Libraries, <https://jewishlibraries.org/index.php>

Book Dragon (Smithsonian), <https://bookdragonreviews.wordpress.com>

Chinese American Librarians Association (CALA), [www.cala-web.org](http://www.cala-web.org)

Hijabi Librarians, <https://hijabilibrarians.com>

Talk Story, <https://talkstorytogether.org/libraries>

Kundiman, <https://kundiman.org>

Middle East Librarians Association (MELA), [www.mela.us](http://www.mela.us)

Chen, F., & Yu, S. (2006). Asian North-American Children's Literature About the Internment: Visualizing and Verbalizing the Traumatic Thing. *Children's Literature In Education*, 37(2), 111-124. doi:10.1007/s10583-006-9001-9

Dahlen, S. P. (2013). How to evaluate children's and young adult books about transracial and transnational Asian adoption. In J. C. Naidoo & S. P. Dahlen (Eds.) *Diversity in young literature: Opening doors through reading* (pp. 149-161). Chicago, IL: ALA.

Jenkins, E. C., & Austin, M. C. (1987). *Literature for children about Asians and Asian Americans : analysis and annotated bibliography, with additional readings for adults*. New York : Greenwood Press, 1987.

Park, L. S. (2002). Staying On Past Canal Street: Reflections on Asian Identity. *Booklist*, 98(9/10), 832.

Son, E.H., & Sung, Y. K. (2013). Beyond sari, Hindu, Monkey God, and Divali: A critical analysis of South Asian cultures and childhoods represented in picture books. In J. C. Naidoo & S. P. Dahlen (Eds.) *Diversity in young literature: Opening doors through reading* (pp. 71-82). Chicago, IL: ALA.

Yokota, J. (2009). Asian Americans in literature for children and young adults. *Teacher Librarian*, 36(3), 15-19.

- **Your "Top 5 Books" list.**

*(All books in this list are picture books)*

**1. Bilal Cooks Daal** by Aisha Saeed

This book features Bilal, a child who invites friends over to eat daal, one of his favorite foods. But he's nervous while his Dad is cooking it, because he starts to worry that his friends won't like it. His friends end up liking it, and a recipe for daal is included in the back of the book.

Parents for Diversity website; Social Justice Books website; Kirkus Reviews Best Picture Book of 2019; Asian/Pacific American Award for Literature Honor Book 2019

I included this book because it's very real. Having the dad do the cooking is a nice stereotype-breaking touch, and acknowledging Bilal's nervousness over whether his friends would like this recipe is affirming for kids, who inevitably experience nerves when sharing something different with friends. I also like the inclusion of a recipe at the end for kids to connect with the book by trying the food the characters learned about. Also, the author is a founding member of We Need Diverse Books.

Classification: By and About (for both author and illustrator)

**2. Amy Wu and the Perfect Bao** by Kat Zhang

Amy is trying to make the perfect bao, but try as she might, she can't quite seem to do that.

This is a popular book in my library and it is shown on the Social Justice Books website

This is a cute book with some fantastic illustrations that catch the eye of lots of kids in our library. I see it requested a lot at work. Additionally, there is also a recipe at the end so that families can make these at home, and the kids can really get an idea of how Amy's variation to make the perfect bao made a difference. There isn't much language represented here, but there is an adorable cat who helps the reader with how to pronounce the word bao.

Classification: By and About (for both author and illustrator)

**3. A Map Into the World** by Kao Kalia Yang

A young girl named Paj Ntaub and her family move into a new home, and meet the neighboring couple, Bob and Ruth. They mostly interact with each other from afar, often waving at each other from across the street. After many months, Ruth passes away and Paj Ntaub offers support to Bob in her own way.

This book was featured on the Social Justice Books website

Beyond the book itself, when I read this from an interview with the author, it touched my heart and I knew I needed to put this on my list. *“One day, I asked the librarian for a book about people like me. She looked and in the end she found books about the Chinese and the Japanese, one book about the Vietnamese. She handed me these books and she said, “I’m so sorry, we have no books about the Hmong on these shelves.” The librarian remembers and I remember whispering under my breath, “One day, a little girl is going to come in here and find a book about the people who love her most.” The seeds of this book were planted 32 years ago.”*

This is just a beautiful story, with magnificent illustrations. It’s sweet and touching and it was written with an intention to provide representation. There are some cultural background notes provided in the book for further education, too, and a few Hmong words throughout.

Classification: By and About (for both author and illustrator)

#### **4. Mina Vs the Monsoon** by Rukhsanna Guidroz

Mina loves playing soccer, but monsoon rains mean she must stay inside. While she’s stuck inside, she connects with her Mom in a whole new way.

I saw this book on the Social Justice Books website

In this book, the reader is introduced to various aspects of Indian culture and also some Indian words in context. Also, it’s a whole new perspective about monsoons- in this book, we learn why they are so important to India’s ecosystem. I think it’s a great way to open up conversation about how different people view things differently.

Classification: By and About (for both author and illustrator)

#### **5. The Many Colors of Harpreet Singh** by Supriya Kelkar

Harpreet and his family move because his Mom got a new job. The new city is gray and snowy, and he is a colorful boy who wears different colored patkas (turbans) each day to match his outfit and mood.

The Social Justice Books website directed me to this book.

This book includes an afterword from a Sikh scholar to help explain some various aspects of the religion and the significance of the turban that Harpreet wears in the book. The colorful symbolism helps kids of all ages really understand how Harpreet’s feelings are in turmoil because of the large life change. Kids understand feeling nervous because of change, and this shows Harpreet managing what he can control while a lot of his life feels out of control. Also, on a personal note, I have a Sikh friend who honestly doesn’t see that much representation in

her life and she spends so much time explaining various aspects of her daily life to other people.

Classification: By and About

## **Other diverse groups (LGBT spectrum, disability experience, and/or religious diversity.)**

- **Case-study (your book evaluation.)**

Behar, Ruth. *Lucky Broken Girl*. Nancy Paulsen Books, 2017.

### **SUMMARY**

Ruthie's family has just come to New York from Cuba when they are in a car accident that leaves Ruthie severely injured. She's put in a body cast and can't move herself- she needs help for everything. It takes about a year of healing for her to achieve some level of normalcy, but she doesn't emerge the same Ruthie she was before the accident.

### **ANALYSIS**

First of all, I have to say that I don't think I would advise this as a representative book for disability, because she was temporarily injured/dealing with this. While a whole year of recovery and work towards walking again is difficult, it's still short term. Most folks who identify as disabled do not have the option of just waiting to heal and going to physical therapy. Ruth Behar's book is not exactly a memoir, but it is based on actual events that happened to her and she did spend almost a year in a cast and bedridden. There are certainly components that were instructional and helpful to read.

Perhaps it was a part of how kids were treated in 1966, but a lot of things in this book angered me. The way that they treated this child, who was 10 years old and had experienced a traumatic event, was infuriating. Her bed faced away from her window, and she was almost fully healed by the time anyone thought to turn it so that she could see anything other than the inside of her room. (In real life, however, they never did turn her bed.) Also, her mother gets so frustrated dealing with helping her all day and she says some awful things to her and in front of her. As an example, when she attempts to wash Ruthie's hair with a basin of water, the water spills all over the bed. Ruthie isn't the one washing the hair. But when her mother realizes that it was too hard on the ONE attempt she made (because she had been using dry shampoo for so long, it needed to be fully washed, which was a choice made by the mother) she said she would just cut off all her hair to make things easier. Ruthie cries out at this, and says that her hair is the only normal thing she has (pg 99 "It's all that's left of my old life, when I was a normal girl") but her mother brings in someone to cut it VERY short. When Ruthie throws a mirror after this

happens, her mother calls her a bad girl. Now, while she does continually apologize for saying things like this to Ruthie, this is not in any way okay, and honestly it does give me pause about recommending this book. That scenario is textbook abuser behavior, and normalizing it like this seems like a bad idea. If it had been just the one incident, maybe I could let it slide. But there is another point in the book where Ruthie has been unable to poop because she's scared to do that with the cast. Her mother basically assaults her with an enema (she does not explain what's about to happen and then just flips her over and sticks something in her butt- that is absolutely not okay) and then GETS MAD AT HER when she can't hold back the flood of waste that comes out. She leaves her child to sit in it- not for a very long time, but long enough for her mother and her grandfather to have a cup of coffee in the next room. And that's just abusive. You can't leave a child in their own waste like that. I have a child who is one year older than Ruthie and it hurt my mama heart to read that.

None of that is framed as I have written it above. It's made easier to digest for middle grade readers, but it's still what happened in the book. If the abusive mother aspect was not there, I think it would be a great read for kids to learn about how traumatic events can affect people. But rather than wanting to recommend this book to young readers, it makes me want to gently ask the author if she's talked with someone about this.

The lifestyle component of the book was quite authentic. This is an immigrant family from Cuba that moved to New York, and the kids share a room while the parents sleep in the living room on a pull-out sofa. Rent is expensive, and her father works two jobs. Because her father had just purchased a car at the start of the book, though, we wonder if they are close to the edge of middle class. Today, that would not seem like an indicator of "moving up" as much, but in 1966, not as many people owned cars. (*In 1966, 489 cars per 1000 people compared to 808 per 1000 people in 2012; Energy.gov*)

Ruthie's character development was very clear and defined through the book, as we get to hear her internal thoughts, her prayers, and her confessions about how she's mad at the man who caused the accident. We see her jealousy with the go-go boots, and her anger when people just pop in, and don't actually stay to visit with her. We watch her mind shift at the realization that the young men in the other car, who did not survive, will never celebrate another birthday and she begins to see the world outside of herself in a whole new light.

The language criterium in the book was an interesting one. I went into this book expecting there to be medical jargon to sort through, but since this was written from a 10 year old's perspective, that didn't seem to be a factor. Instead, there was a lot of Spanish, as the family is Cuban, and some Yiddish, as they are also Jewish. The placement of these words sprinkled in felt very genuine, as most of it came from the older relatives, and we know that Ruthie accompanies her mother on errands to act as a translator because her English is not as strong as Ruthie's.

Now, this book's representation of culture was not disability culture, but Cuban and some Jewish culture. Those parts did all appear authentic- when I read about them eating 13 grapes for luck at midnight on New Year's Eve, I was familiar with that because my sister-in-law teaches middle school Spanish and this is a tradition she started to do many years back, when she learned of it.

As for the purpose of this book related to culture, I definitely got the feeling that the motivation was more to celebrate the harmonizing of several cultures- when she would pray to Frida Kahlo and Shiva and God all at once, for instance, it wasn't done to poke fun at religion. She found solace of a sort within many parts of life and also within religion. Her family, while Jewish, did not eat pork (pg 137) but there weren't many overt examples of her family's faith practices in the book. I didn't get the feeling that the religion component of their life was strict. At least, not so strict that a 10 year old would feel like it was a controlling element in her life.

## CONCLUSION

I've already covered the recommendation, but I want to elaborate. This book is well written. It's compelling. It's a very important story. But it's not one that I would advocate a library get for disability representation. As I mentioned, this is a short-term situation for Ruthie, though clearly there were long-term effects of the experience. But I don't think those are as much related to being immobilized as much as they were related to having an abusive family member and feeling ignored/left to wither/being asked to not make a fuss. Many adults that she encounters along the way are dismissive of her very real feelings and trauma. And while it's not exactly the same thing, it reminds me of when Sesame Street chose to have Snuffleupagus be seen by adults, because the creators of the show realized how awful it would be if kids internalized that adults don't always believe children (Fessenden). They wanted kids to know that they could tell adults hard truths and be believed. Telling a 10 year old that they "only" have a broken leg when someone else is paralyzed is a bit harsh when they are in a body cast. Trauma is trauma and the fact that someone else has more trauma does not make your own any easier to handle.

So, no, I do not recommend this book for disability representation. Yes, I do recommend it if you want to examine medical mindset evolutions and adaptations when dealing with pediatrics. I think that although it is written for middle grade readers, it would serve a higher purpose being read by adults who interact with children, to give them a more empathetic response to the kids they encounter.

"Fact #841- Vehicles per thousand people: U.S. vs. Other world regions." *Energy.gov*, 6 October 2014, <https://www.energy.gov/eere/vehicles/fact-841-october-6-2014-vehicles-thousand-people-us-vs-other-world-regions>.

Fessenden, Marissa. "A brief history of Sesame Street's Snuffleupagus identity crisis." *Smithsonian Magazine*, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/brief-history-sesame-streets-snuffleupagus-identity-crisis-180957351/>. Accessed 21 November 2021.

- **List of resources: artists (authors and illustrators,) awards, organizations, experts, websites, publishers, and recommended books. *These resources will be listed under each category of "top 5" books, instead of all bundled together in one list here.***

- **Your "Top 5 Books" list.**

## **LGBTQIA**

*(These are all YA or middle grades selections)*

### **1. Will Grayson, Will Grayson** by John Green and David Levithan

This was the first LGBT themed book to make the New York Times children's best-seller list. It also received the 2011 Stonewall Book Award (YA). Personally, I'm a fan of Levithan's and Green's many other books, and because the two different Wills (one is straight, one is gay) meet in the book and have a great impact on each other, I think it's a fabulous 'window' for many readers.

Classification: ½ by and about (two authors, two stories that intertwine, Levithan is the insider)

### **2. The Whispers** by Greg Howard

This one is a middle grades book, but I like the way that the LGBTQ aspect is a side story of this book instead of a main focus. For younger readers, this is a great way to show how very normal the boy's feelings are.

Classification: By and about

### **3. If I Was Your Girl** by Meredith Russo

This one has won a ton of awards but I had not heard of it. (Stonewall Book Award Winner, Walter Dean Myers Honor Book for Outstanding Children's Literature, iBooks YA Novel of the Year, *Publishers Weekly* Best Book of the Year, *Kirkus Reviews* Best Book of the Year, Amazon Best Book of the Year, Zoella Book Club Selection, Barnes & Noble Best YA Book of the Year,

Bustle Best YA Book of the Year, IndieNext Top 10, One of Flavorwire's 50 Books Every Modern Teenager Should Read) This book is about a transgender teen girl who arrives at a new school.

Classification: By and about

#### 4. **None of the Above** by I.W. Gregorio

This book's main character discovers that she was born intersex and honestly, I included it because I really don't think the "I" in LGBTQIA gets that much representation. I saw this book on a list post of "top LGBT YA books".

Classification: About. (While I try to include only "by and about" this one seemed important to include for the subject matter, and also while the author is not intersex, she is a founding member of We Need Diverse Books, and the story was inspired by an actual person.)

#### 5. **Luna** by Julie Anne Peters

Another middle grades book, and one that I actually got to read. This one has also won a lot of awards, including but not limited to Stonewall Honor Book 2005, American Library Association Best Book for Young Adults 2005, and many state-level book awards. Luna is about a transgender teen, told from the perspective of her sister. We see many different reactions to Luna through various characters, all of which appear authentic.

Classification: About (while the author is in the LGBTQIA community, I do not believe that she is transgender, and this makes sense to me since the book's perspective is CLOSE to the title character, but not actually her.)

### *Authors*

- Becky Albertalli
- Dean Atta
- Kacen Callender
- Juno Dawson
- Alex Gino
- Leah Johnson
- CB Lee
- David Levithan
- Julie Anne Peters
- Gabby Rivera
- Meredith Russo

## Awards

Lambda Literary Awards, <https://lambdaliterary.org>

Stonewall Book Awards, [www.ala.org/rt/rrt/award/stonewall](http://www.ala.org/rt/rrt/award/stonewall)

## Reviews and other resources

American Psychology Association (APA). *Key terms and concepts in understanding gender diversity and sexual orientation among students*. Retrieved from:

[www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/programs/safe-supportive/lgbt/key-terms.pdf](http://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/programs/safe-supportive/lgbt/key-terms.pdf)

Family Equality, [www.familyequality.org/family-support/lgbtq-books/](http://www.familyequality.org/family-support/lgbtq-books/)

Naidoo, J. C. (2012). *Rainbow Family Collections: Selecting and Using Children's Books with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Content*. Libraries Unlimited.

Rainbow Round Table reviews, [www.glbtrt.ala.org/reviews/](http://www.glbtrt.ala.org/reviews/)

Stonewall UK, [www.stonewall.org.uk/education-resources/lgbtq-inclusive-books-children-and-young-people](http://www.stonewall.org.uk/education-resources/lgbtq-inclusive-books-children-and-young-people)

Welcoming Schools via the HRC, <https://welcomingschools.org/resources/childrens-books-lgbtq-inclusive>

## **Disability Experience**

1. **Out of My Mind** by Sharon Draper (side note: in the future, I might also include her follow-up, *Out of My Heart*, which was released Sept 29 this year)

I found this book when I was doing a book bingo challenge for work. When I looked it up to see what awards it's inevitably received, I counted almost 50 on the Simon & Schuster page for it, so I will refrain from listing them all here. Melody is the main character and she has cerebral palsy. A lot of people around her assume that she isn't very smart, but she is exceedingly intelligent. I found a very personal connection to this character because I've had two people in my close family with CP- my husband's sister and my aunt. Draper's portrayal of Melody's experience seems authentic to me.

Classification: about

## 2. **A Boy and a Jaguar** by Alan Rabinowitz, illustrated by Catia Chien

I found this book on a list from Easter Seals, which serves the disability community. It also won the 2015 Schneider Family book award. Alan is a boy who is removed from his classroom because of his stutter, and he feels broken. But he discovers that he speaks fluidly when he is singing or talking to animals. He promises a jaguar at the Bronx Zoo that he will speak for him, and when he is older, he advocates for jaguars in Belize. This is based on Rabinowitz's own life experiences.

Classification: by and about

## 3. **Fast Friends** by Heather O'Connor, illustrated by Claudia Davila

This book was recommended by the IRIS Center at Peabody College, which is a group "dedicated to improving education outcomes for children, especially those with disabilities" and this book is about a girl named Suze, who is nonverbal and in a wheelchair and Tyson, who is high energy and can be seen as disruptive in school. The two form a connection, and Tyson can understand what Suze is saying without speaking. Tyson ends up teaching the other kids how to listen and pay attention so they can understand Suze too. The author of this book is Suze's mother, and she said that Tyson was representative of many children that Suze did encounter in her inclusive school.

Classification: about

## 4. **Just Because** by Rebecca Elliott (author and illustrator)

When I saw this book on a list from the IRIS Center, I did a double take, because Rebecca Elliott has written a lot of books that kids love, but I had not heard of this one. Elliott based this book on two of her children, even using their names. Toby's older sister Clemmie can't do a lot of things, like walking or talking or cooking macaroni "just because". As the story goes on, the reader understands that Clemmie has special needs. Toby just adores his big sister and talks about all the fun they have together, though. It's very sweet, and the positively glowing rave reviews on Amazon from the many moms of kids with special needs sealed the deal for me to add this to my list.

Classification: about

## 5. **Charlie and Frog** by Karen Kane

This middle grades book was also featured on a list from the IRIS Center, and has also been recognized as a Sunshine State book this year. Francine (aka Frog) is a deaf girl who meets

Charlie and they solve a mystery together after Charlie encounters a woman who seems to confess something to him using only sign language. Readers will learn signs throughout the book. Kane is a sign language interpreter. This book is the first in a series. This is a great representation, because it's only with Frog's help and special knowledge of signing that they can crack the case.

Classification: about

### *Authors*

- Cece Bell
- Lynda Mullaly Hunt
- Patricia Polacco
- Alan Rabinowitz
- Jordan Scott
- Francisco X. Stork

### *Awards*

Schneider Family Book Award, <https://www.ala.org/awardsgrants/schneider-family-book-award>

### *Reviews and other resources*

Book Riot, <https://bookriot.com/disability-representation-in-childrens-books/>

Disabilities in Kid Lit, <https://disabilityinkidlit.com>

Farmer, L. (2013). *Library services for youth with autism spectrum disorders*. Chicago, IL: American Library Association.

Klipper, B. (2014). *Programming for children and teens with autism spectrum disorder*. Chicago, IL: American Library Association.

## **Religious Diversity**

*For this list, I decided that I wanted to have each book represent a different religion.*

1. **Dream Big, Little Kaur** by Jasneet Kaur, illustrated by Pardeep Singh

I found this recommendation on KaurLife.org in a list of books with Sikh representation. (Kaur is a suffix designation given to Sikh women) This book celebrates women in Sikh history and inspires Sikh girls.

Classification: by and about

## 2. **Hannah and the Ramadan Gift** by Qasim Rashid, illustrated by Aaliya Jaleel

This book was glowingly reviewed on HijabiLibrarians.com. Gives a good overview of Ramadan practices and why they are done.

Classification: by and about

## 3. **Mahavira: The Hero of Nonviolence** by Manoj Jain

I had to seek this one out- there don't appear to be a ton of picture books about Jainism. This book is like a history about the origins of Jainism- and is beautifully *illustrated by Demi*.

Classification: by and about

## 4. **I Once Was a Monkey: Stories Buddha Told** by Jeanne M Lee (author and illustrator)

For this book, I read several reviews on Amazon that were left by reviewers who practice Buddhism and they rated it highly. It was favorably reviewed by Booklist, and the author has won several awards.

Classification: by and about

## 5. **The Rabbi Slurps Spaghetti** by Leslie Kimmelman, illustrated by Sharon Davey

I saw this book on PJLibrary.org which is kind of like the Dolly Parton free book program, but is specifically for Jewish children. (Though the PJ just stands for pajamas. They have this in their FAQ.) This is a cute picture book about what a Rabbi does in the community, with very engaging illustrations.

Classification: by and about

### *Authors*

- Judy Blume
- Keren David
- Saadia Faruqi

- Hena Khan
- Ibtihaj Muhammad
- Michael Rosen
- Jane Yolen

### *Awards*

Jewish Children's Book Award, <http://greenbeanbooks.com/award/>

Middle East Book Awards, <http://www.meoc.us/picture-book.html>

National Jewish Book Awards, <https://www.jewishbookcouncil.org/awards/national-jewish-book-awards>

Sydney Taylor Book Award, [https://jewishlibraries.org/sydney\\_taylor\\_book\\_award/](https://jewishlibraries.org/sydney_taylor_book_award/)

### *Reviews and other resources*

Association of Jewish Libraries, <https://jewishlibraries.org/index.php>

The Buddhist Centre, <https://thebuddhistcentre.com/triratna-buddhist-families/triratna-parents-network/books-buddhist-kids-parents>

JainOnline, <https://www.jainonline.org/jain-pictorial-children-story-books.asp>

Kaur Life (Sikh) <https://kaurlife.org/2019/02/25/sikh-illustrations-in-childrens-books/>

PJ Library (Jewish) <https://PJLibrary.org>

*Additional links for awards/reviews/resources that are **not specific for any one group**, but are generally considered an indicator of high-quality books and/or are geared for representation of multiple groups.*

Booklist, <https://www.booklistonline.com/>

Caldecott Medal, <https://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/caldecott>

Criteria for Evaluating Multicultural Literature PDF

Kirkus Reviews, <https://www.kirkusreviews.com/>

Learning For Justice, <https://www.learningforjustice.org/>

Newbery Medal, <https://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/newbery>

Notable Books for a Global Society, <http://www.clrsig.org/nbgs-lists.html>

Parents for Diversity, <https://parentsfordiversity.com/>

Publishers Weekly, <https://www.publishersweekly.com/>

School Library Journal, <https://www.slj.com/?subpage=Reviews%2B>

Social Justice Books, <https://socialjusticebooks.org/booklists/>

We Need Diverse Books, <https://diversebooks.org/>

## Part C: Application

### [Marcus Vega Book Talk](#)



## CONCLUSION

In this class, I have learned a lot about evaluating materials for a diverse collection within my library. Having the opportunity to evaluate books through the lens of representation has been eye-opening, but also, I understand that my privilege in the world means that I will never be the 'expert' when it comes to representation of other cultures and experiences. Reading the reviews of books from my classmates was also fascinating, because sometimes we would have

pretty different perspectives, and I found it helpful to see things from another viewpoint. This illustrates well the fact that there is no 'perfect' representation of any group. Every author will have a unique perspective, and many voices are needed to create diverse harmony within a solid collection of books. As I progress through my library career, I will be sure to continue to keep that PDF of Criteria for Evaluating Multicultural Literature handy, as I found it immensely helpful to refer to as I was reading. Additionally, I will continue to message the Acquisitions department as I have through this semester to suggest updates or changes to the catalog (changing the author's name from James to Juno Dawson for *This Book is Gay* and changing the title of the book *George* to *Melissa's Story* as requested by the author, both of which have been done). When and if I am in a spot to create a display or program again, I will ensure that the books chosen represent all of the people of our community. If no books are found within our collection to be representative, I will find them and request that they be added. And I think that for good measure, I will print out and keep on my desk this excerpt from an interview with Kao Kalia Lang, because it's a great reminder of how powerful representation is, *"One day, I asked the librarian for a book about people like me. She looked and in the end she found books about the Chinese and the Japanese, one book about the Vietnamese. She handed me these books and she said, 'I'm so sorry, we have no books about the Hmong on these shelves.' The librarian remembers and I remember whispering under my breath, 'One day, a little girl is going to come in here and find a book about the people who love her most.' The seeds of this book were planted 32 years ago."*