

Literary Genre Bibliography: MCGF

Graphic Novels

Craft, Jerry. *Class act*. Quill Tree Books, 2020. ISBN: 978-0-06-288551-7

Summary:

In this sequel to *New Kid*, Drew is really feeling the words his grandma tells him every day, “You have to work twice as hard to be just as good.” Actually, he’s feeling those words to the point that he is starting to withdraw from the great friends he has at school and in his neighborhood. The book does still offer humorous situations like Jordan Banks wondering and worrying about when he’s finally going to grow a few inches and stop looking like a little kid. The story also points out the teacher fails and microaggressions that aren’t funny at all and that always need to be addressed.

I didn’t find them all, but there are cameo appearances, or Easter eggs, by lots of authors throughout the story.

Curricular Ties: Kids will love reading this book, and I hope it is in school and classroom libraries for all kids to read!

Audience:

4th grade +

*Jamieson, Victoria and Omar Mohamed. *When stars are scattered*, 2020. ISBN: 978-1-72548-313-2

Summary:

Omar Mohamed lives in Dadaab Refugee Camp in Kenya with his younger brother, Hassan, who has a seizure disorder, and Fatuma, an elderly woman who fosters them in their parents’ absence. The boys’ father was killed in Somalia’s civil war and they were separated from their mother. They desperately hope she is still alive. The book covers six years while Omar struggles with decisions about attending school and how much hope to resettle in the United States. Through Omar’s journey, and those of his friends and family members, readers get a close, powerful view of the trauma and uncertainty as a refugee as well as the faith, love, and support from the unexpected that get people through it. This is labeled a near-memoir as Omar worked with Victoria Jamieson to create his story while making it attainable for kids. (Kirkus reviews adapted)

Curricular Ties:

Social studies, immigration, graphic novel readers

Audience:

4th grade +

Johnson, Varian. *Twins*. First Second, 2020. ISBN: 978-1-33823-613-2

Summary:

For the first time, identical twins Maureen and Francine begin the school year with different class schedules. Starting middle school, outgoing Francine is fine with it, but soft-spoken Maureen is filled with anxiety. When both girls decide to run for sixth grade class president, they are faced with sorting out decisions that could force them apart or grow them closer. Most of the characters in the story are African American with distinctions of reality that include an incident of discrimination at a shopping mall.

Curricular Ties:

A fun graphic for kids to relate to and enjoy.

Audience:

4th grade +

*Leyh, Kat. *Snapdragon*. First Second, 2020. ISBN: 978-1-25017111-5

Summary:

Snapdragon, an independent young soul, lives with her hardworking mom and their three-legged dog, Good Boy. She has a friend Louis, but otherwise most kids think she is weird. Snapdragon meets an old witch, or so she thinks, in the woods. They end up becoming animal-loving friends not knowing their histories already intersect. Besides being about witches and ghosts and magic, Snapdragon is also about love and friendship, individuality, and gender identity. I loved that Kat Leyh's artwork showed all sorts of body shapes, skin colors, and hair types. There were very strong characters and lots of inclusive adults.

Curricular Ties:

This would be a great book for art teachers, for teachers teaching graphic novel conventions, for health units, guidance counselors, but more importantly: for kids' reading enjoyment.

Audience:

3rd grade +

Everybody

Love, Jessica. *Julian at the wedding*. Candlewick Press, 2020. ISBN: 978-1-53621-238-9

Summary:

Julián (*Julián is a mermaid*) returns, this time as part of a wedding. Julián and Abuela arrive at an outdoor wedding and each meet friends, Abuela, a familiar friend and Julián, a new one. He and new friend, Marisol hold the leash of the two brides' dog, Gloria, and throw petals at this 'party of love'. Most of the main characters are Black or have brown skin. Julián and Abuela are Afro-Latinx, and Abuela's friend and Marisol are also presented as Latinx.

Curricular Ties:

Cultural competency, social studies, read-aloud

Audience:

K+

*Raul the Third. *¡Vamos! Let's go eat*. Versify, 2020. ISBN: 978-1-32855704-9

Summary:

¡Vamos! Let's Go Eat is a love letter to the foods of Mexico. Little Lobo and his friends are asked to deliver lunch to lucha libre (or professional wrestling) stars, but because they all want different foods, Little Lobo and crew must make stops at all the different food trucks and specialty shops. Readers' mouths will be watering as they read this book, and there are lots of Spanish words and phrases that kids will love to learn. Reviews say this is a homage to Picasso's Guernica, contains recognizable landmarks in

Ciudad Juárez–El Paso, and is filled with pop culture references. Kirkus Reviews also says, “The busy pages filled with interesting characters and intriguing bilingual signage make readers wish they could jump into the pages and experience the bustling town. Bay’s comic book–style coloring and creative textures provide a deep cultural exposure to the lavish array of Mexican food throughout the spreads. After enjoying the story, readers will keep going back to savor all the minuscule details. A delectable bilingual experience.”

Curricular Ties:

community, ELL, social studies

Audience:

Kindergarten on up!

*Thompkins-Bigelow, Jamilah. *Your name is a song*. The Innovation Press, 2020. ISBN: 978-1-943147-72-4

Summary:

I hope that every teacher, no matter the grade they teach, buys the book *Your Name is a Song* for themselves and their classroom. I say this because it IS hard to say some students’ names. But we have to try hard to get it right every time because names matter. As teachers, we can follow the advice of the mom in this story. Her daughter had a difficult first day of school because no one could say her name correctly. Her mom says to sing every name like it is a song. Doing it like that will help people remember how to say it! So the girl goes back to school and says everyone’s name like a song: Bob, Sara, Muhhamed, Adama, Akhila, Kokoe- each word really is beautiful.

Curricular Ties:

I think this book would make a great read-aloud for a Morning Meetings or for teachers at a professional development.

Audience:

As a smart colleague once said, “Everybody books really are for everybody!”

*Walker, Tricia Elam. *Nana akua goes to school*. Schwartz & Wade Books, 2020. ISBN: 978-0-525-58113-0

Summary:

Nana Akua Goes to School is a beautiful picture book. It’s Grandparents Day at school and all of the kids are excited for their most special visitors. But Zura is afraid that her school community won’t understand her Nana’s traditional West African tribal marks, and that someone might be mean to her because of it. But Nana Akua handles the situation with the wisdom of a smart woman, and she helps adults and children understand the meaning of the marks and other Adinkra symbols.

Curricular Ties:

cultural competency, grandparents, social studies, read aloud, West Africa, customs

Audience:

Kindergarten +

Fiction

Blankman, Anne. *Blackbird girls*. Viking, 2020. ISBN: 978-1-984837-35-6

Summary:

This book is historical fiction.

Valentina Kaplan and Oksana Savchenko's fathers both work at the nuclear plant, and the girls are as unfriendly towards each other as their fathers. Despite their dislike for the other person, the girls are forced to flee Pripjat together after the nuclear explosion. But it is after being taken in by Valentina's grandmother in Leningrad that Oksana begins to realize the lies she's been told about Jewish people and what true friendship, caring, and love are all about. The book is told in Valentina and Oksana's alternating points of view, and there is also another girl's historical story interspersed throughout. Anne Blankman's writing reminded me a little of Ruth Sepetys. And just as a warning, there is some physical abuse.

Curricular Ties:

Social studies, read aloud, reading group

Audience:

4th-5th grade +

*Callender, Kacen. *King and the dragonflies*. Scholastic, 2020. ISBN: 978-1-33812-933-5

Summary:

This book is both sad and hopeful. There are lots of descriptions and some dream scenes so I do think it would require a stick-with-it reader or else a parent or teacher reading it with their kids.

Kingston James lives in Louisiana. His older brother, Khalid, died at soccer practice, and his family is reeling from this loss. King finds comfort in dragonflies because he thinks that is what Khalid is now - a dragonfly. King is also coming to understand that he might be gay, even though his revered older brother told him he couldn't be friends with gay people and his own parents have biases towards gay people as well. To add to the mix, King's friend Sandy is dealing with life, which includes his sexuality and his abusive father. So yes, it's a heavy story. But also an important one.

Callender wrote this story after they heard a comment from a friend, "I've never seen a middle-grade book featuring a gay Black boy."

Curricular Ties:

This is a heavy book, and kids might need some warning about the abuse, but it would foster some excellent discussions in a book club or reading group.

Audience:

5th grade +

*Cisneros, Ernesto. *Efrén divided*. Harper, 2020. ISBN: 978-0-06-288168-7

Summary:

This book by Ernesto Cisneros is a tough but important story.

Efrén is a great kid. He loves his family, does well in school, and has a lot of friends. His life in southern California implodes when his mother is deported in an ICE raid. His younger brother and sister become his responsibility since his Dad needs to work overtime on top of overtime to save money to get his mother back to the United States. But it's hard to take care of twin kindergarteners, and Efrén's schoolwork begins to suffer as his stress increases.

In a matter-of-fact voice, we learn about the tenuous situation immigrant families might face, the heartbreaking impact of deportations, and the helpful and resilient nature of the close-knit Mexican

American community. Activism by young people and the influence of caring teachers is also present in the book.

Curricular Ties:

social studies, current events

Audience:

4th grade + (Please note: As with all books, before reading this in your class, you need to take note of your students; reading this might hit close to home for many of them.)

Gino, Alex. *Rick*. Thorndike Press, 2020. ISBN: 978-1-33804-810-0

Summary:

Rick by Alex Gino is the story of a boy who has always been a follower of his friend, Jeff. But Jeff is vulgar about girls, is a total jerk, and an even bigger bully. Rick needs to separate from him and find his own identity. At the urging of his grandfather, Rick does just this. He also joins the after school club, The Rainbow Spectrum, where he learns about all of the gender identities.

Curricular Ties:

Health, read-aloud, guidance, cultural-competency

Audience:

4th grade +

Jung, Mike. *The boys in the back row*. Levine Querido, 2020. ISBN: 978-1-64614-011-4.

Summary:

You know how girls who are close friends can give each other hugs and hold hands and say “I love you” and can spend all their time together? In a lot of cases, it’s hard for boys to do that. Or if they do it, they might have to say something “masculine” to off-set the behavior. This book is a story of two really good friends, Matt and Eric, who are boys. They are in the school band, they love comics, and yes- they are bullied because of their friendship.

After finding out that Eric is moving across the country, the boys decide to skip the last day of their school band trip to go to a comics convention.

The message about toxic masculinity is an important one, and I think the book did a good job with it. A lot of boys feel the pressure to be rough and tumble, but underneath it’s really not how they want to be.

Curricular Ties:

Friendships, could be a read-aloud

Audience:

4th grade +

*Park, Linda Sue. *Prairie lotus*. Clarion Books, 2020. ISBN: 978-1-32878150-5

Summary:

Prairie Lotus is a historical fiction book set in the Dakota Territory in 1880.

In her Author’s Note, Ms. Park says that she loved the *Little House on the Prairie* books when she was young, but that she was always uncomfortable with the racism found in the stories, especially Ma’s blatant dislike of Native Indians, and also in the scene where Pa takes place in a blackface minstrel show. That saying, “Write the book you want to read?” It’s what Linda Sue Park did. While changing the characters but still modeling them after those in Wilder’s books, she took the parts she loved from *Little House* and made them better. Then she took the racist parts and confronted them head on.

Hanna’s father is white, and her mother was Chinese. Because of her appearance, Hanna is treated differently in LaForge, a town in the Dakota Territory. She experiences blatant racism, microaggressions and outright assault as she tries to finish school and as she and her father try to open a dress shop. My

favorite parts were with the Native American women and the memories of Hanna's mom- the figure who taught her to sew, to stand up for what is right, who showed kindness at many turns, and was a courageous woman herself.

Curricular Ties:

Still reading *Little House on the Prairie* to your class? Try this book instead!

Audience:

4th/5th grade +

Rosewater, Kit. *The derby daredevils Kenzie kickstarts a team*. Amulet Paperbacks, 2020. ISBN: 978-1-71375-031-4

Summary:

Fifth graders Kenzie and Shelley are two derby-obsessed best friends who call themselves the Dynamic Duo. When they find out there will be a junior league, they set out to recruit three other girls for their squad. These three, along with the other characters in the story, present as a diverse group. This story includes a transgender father who is 'incidental to the story' and Kenze's feelings toward another girl that she can't quite categorize.

Curricular Ties:

Fun, friendship, lbgtq+, sports

Audience:

3rd grade +

Stead, Rebecca. *The list of things that will not change*. Yearling, 2020. ISBN: 978-1-71374-005-6

Summary:

When Bea was 8, her parents divorced, and now, four years later, her father is going to marry another man. She is excited because she loves her dad's partner and looks forward to his daughter, Sonia, as the sister she always wanted. However, when Sonia comes to visit for the first time, she does not share the excitement. Lots of issues are found in the story - divorce, therapy, homophobia - but dealt with in an authentic and accessible way with an honest voice that kids and adults can relate. "The acknowledgements that not every problem can be solved and that doing a bad thing does not necessarily make someone a bad person will reassure readers that they too can find balance and comfort in complicated circumstances." (Kirkus)

Curricular Ties:

Lgbtq+, families

Audience:

4th grade +

Nonfiction

*Favilli, Elena. *Good night stories for rebel girls. 100 immigrant women who changed the world.*
Timbuktu Labs, Inc., 2020. ISBN: 978-1-73332-929-3

Summary:

This collective biography was one I loved from cover to cover. Each two-page spread includes a short narrative that tells the woman's accomplishments, the obstacles they face(d) and some personal details. At the bottom of the first page of each entry are dates of birth and death (if applicable), along with the locations from and to which the women immigrated. On the opposite page is a colorful portrait done by 100 different female illustrators. There are some I recognize, like Rihanna, and many I loved learning about, like the first female Muslim soccer referee who hopes to ref the 2023 Women's World Cup. How cool is that?

Curricular Ties:

Immigration, sexism, social studies

Audience:

Grades 3+ and a read-aloud to 2-6

*Highest recommendations