### **Children's Literature Reviews**



# Global Children's Literature

Jonda C. McNair, Alan R. Bailey, Lesley Colabucci, and Deanna Day

In keeping with the theme of this issue, "Local Literacies in a Global World," we feature a selection of books that were first published outside of the United States as well as titles published in this country that have global settings and themes. Not surprisingly, then, we meet characters living in a variety of geographical areas. It is our hope that this column will heighten readers' awareness about the importance of introducing children to a range of cultural norms, worldviews, and historical information through the use of global children's literature.



### Migrant

Written by Maxine Trottier Illustrated by Isabelle Arsenault Groundwood Books, 2011, unpaged, ISBN 978-088899-975-7

Stories of migrant workers are not a mainstay of

children's literature. A handful of novels focused on Mexican migrants have garnered critical acclaim (e.g., *Return to Sender* by Julia Alvarez and *The Circuit* by Francisco Jiménez), but these stories are still missing from our classrooms and libraries. This picturebook offers a new perspective on migrant labor and life "on the border" for younger readers. Anna's German Mennonite family travels between Canada and Mexico throughout the year doing agricultural work. Anna's longing to stay in one place is conveyed through both the words and pictures. Lyrical metaphors comparing Anna to various animals reveal her connection to

nature, her vivid imagination, and her heartfelt desire to feel more settled.

The mixed-media illustrations are both whimsical and calming. The pastel colors, carefully designed clothing, and double-paged spreads keep the story rooted in Anna's experience and perspective. *Migrant* stands out as a piece of global children's literature because its main character's way of life involves crossing borders and cultures. In addition, the close-knit family featured in the book offers readers a glimpse into a cultural and religious group they may know very little about. The author has included a detailed note for readers who may be curious about the background of this unique story. (LC)



### Lala Salama: A Tanzanian Lullaby

Written by Patricia MacLachlan Illustrated by Elizabeth Zunon Candlewick Press, 2011, unpaged, ISBN 978-0-7636-4747-6

With Lake Tanganyika as its

setting, *Lala Salama* chronicles a day in the life of an African family living in western Tanzania. During morning hours, a mother and child watch father, a local fisherman, clean and prepare his boat. Once baba's day begins, mother bathes her child, wraps him in a vividly colored kanga, and gathers water before tending the fields with her

young one on her back. As afternoon approaches, she prepares food and gathers more water. When night falls, mother takes father a basket of food and a lantern, since his workday extends into the night. The little one falls asleep as mother and child sit outside their thatched-roof house, watching boats sail across the lake in the serene darkness. Both mother and child know that one of those dim glowing lights belongs to baba as they anticipate his safe return to shore. Combined with radiant two-paged oil illustrations on watercolor paper, this lullaby lovingly unearths the culture, language, simplicity, tranquility, and splendor found along the fresh waters of Lake Tanganyika. Lala salama means "sleep well" in Swahili, the official language of Tanzania. In the words of author Patricia MacLachlan, "Every child in the world should go to sleep at night hearing comforting words: sweet dreams, sleep peacefully, good night, I love you, lala salama." (AB)

The book highlights his friendship with Louis Cartier, the jeweler who invented a wristwatch especially for Santos-Dumont so that he could more easily check the time while flying. It also focuses on a duel that took place on November 12, 1906, between Santos-Dumont and another aviator named Louis Bléroit, "who would later become the first man to cross the English Channel in an airplane." Bléroit failed in his attempt to fly his airplane but Santos-Dumont did not. "He flew for little more than twenty seconds, but it was long enough to gain recognition as the first pilot to lift off and land a completely selfpropelled airplane." The illustrations, which were created using pastels, chalks, oil pastels, and oil paint on simple (and sometimes recycled) colored paper, "depict stylish Parisians of the early 1990s as they admire the talent and exploits of Santos-Dumont." The book concludes with an informative author's note about Alberto Santos-Dumont, a bibliography. and an index. (JM)



# The Fabulous Flying Machines of Alberto SantosDumont

Written by Victoria Griffith Illustrated by Eva Montanari Abrams, 2011, unpaged, ISBN 978-1-4197-0011-8

This is a biography of Alberto Santos-Dumont, the unsung Brazilian inventor who,

like the more well-known Wright Brothers, was also a pioneer in the field of aviation. In the early 1900s, Alberto Santos-Dumont was known in Paris for using his dirigible, "a controllable balloon of his own design," to shop at stores and visit his friends, climbing down from a long rope onto the street at each stop. Santos-Dumont loved floating over Paris in his own personal flying machine. It had helped make him one of the most famous men in the city, if not the world! "Everyone," he thought, "should have this much fun running a simple errand."



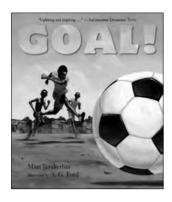
### Come and Eat!

Written and photoillustrated by George Ancona Charlesbridge, 2011, unpaged, ISBN 978-1-58089-366-4

In colorful photographs, everyone is invited to come and eat!

Young children will be introduced to different types of food, as well as religious and holiday traditions, in this picturebook. When, how, what, where, and why we eat depends on our cultures. Many people eat to celebrate special events or holidays such as Hanukkah, Saint Lucia's Day, or Las Posadas. Some people eat with forks, knives, and spoons; others use chopsticks or their fingers. Some people say a prayer, or grace, to give thanks for the food on their table. People from Polynesian islands celebrate with a roasted pig and coconut water. A Nigerian family eats fufu, a cassava root that is similar to mashed potatoes. After a prayer, Tibetans eat delicious meat dumplings

called momos. People dine in different places from cafeterias to job sites to outside at campfires. Eating isn't just to satisfy our hunger, but is also a time to sit down, share a meal together, converse about the events of the day, and celebrate life together. (DD)



Goal!

Written by Mina Javaherbin Illustrated by A. G. Ford Candlewick Press, 2010, unpaged, ISBN 978-0-7636-4571-7

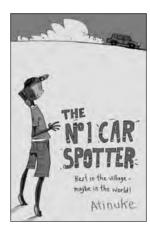
You might call it soccer, but outside of the United States and Canada, the game is called football, and

as a boy growing up in South Africa, Ajani is proud of the new federation-size football he received for being the top reader in his class. The old plastic football he and his friends are accustomed to playing with is now an object of the past. Because Ajani has completed his homework and has a bit of free time before he must gather well water and return home, he decides this is the perfect moment for a game of football! While setting up his water buckets as the goal, he shouts the names of five friends and one by one they arrive to join Ajani to play the game. The streets in this South African township, however, are not safe, so one of the boys must climb to a nearby rooftop to serve as guard, looking out for older boys who bully and steal from younger boys like Ajani and his friends.

When playing with the new regulation football (soccer ball), the boys feel as if they are members of *Bafana Bafana*, the name affectionately given to South Africa's national football team! As the excitement of the game commences, the boys feel a false sense of safety and temporarily forget the dangers of playing in the streets . . . until three bullies on bicycles corner them in the alleyway. Two of Ajani's friends, Hassan and Jamal, quickly implement a plan to protect the federation-size

football, and the others follow their lead. Thanks to their quick thinking, Ajani retains ownership of his new football, and the young boys resume their game.

South Africa's love and need for football is affectionately told in this picturebook by Javaherbin. Complemented by luminous oil illustrations filled with detailed, expressive faces and action-packed movement, *Goal!* has been hailed by Archbishop Desmond Tutu as an uplifting and inspiring book that is a "gift for soccer fans and all families around the world." (AB)



### The Nº 1 Car Spotter

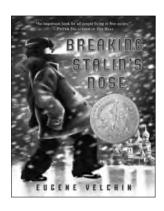
Written by Atinuke Illustrated by Warwick Johnson Cadwell Kane Miller, 2011, 112 pp., ISBN 978-1-61067-051-7

Meet Oluwalase Babatunde Benson, also known as "the No 1" because he is the best car spotter in his whole village, maybe

in the world. Told from his viewpoint, the book opens, "On the continent of Africa, you will find my country. In my country there are many cities, all with skyscrapers, hotels, offices. There are also many smaller towns, all with tap water and electricity and television. Then there is my village, where we only talk about such things" (p. 7). What the village does have is a main road (or a No 1 road as Oluwalase refers to it), and he likes to entertain himself by yelling out the names of cars (e.g., Firebird, Suzuki, Land Cruiser) as they pass. His favorite car is the Toyota Corolla because there is one in his village that broke down and was never removed. About the Toyota Corolla, No 1 informs readers that "[i]t will not go. It will never carry us around like rich people. But it is still my favorite car. Often I dream I am driving this car along the road, fast!" (p. 15).

This chapter book features four stories focusing on the adventures of N° 1. One involves him

using the Toyota Corolla to help members of his village get their wares to the market to sell after their wooden cart breaks, while another focuses on his efforts to help his ailing grandmother get to the doctor. Black-and-white illustrations are interspersed throughout the four chapters and complement the story by capturing its humor and the vivacious spirit of the N<sup>o</sup> 1. Readers who enjoy this book will also want to read *The N<sup>o</sup> 1 Car Spotter and the Firebird*. (JM)



# Breaking Stalin's Nose

Written and illustrated by Eugene Velchin Henry Holt, 2011, 151 pp., ISBN 978-0-8050-9216-5

Joseph Stalin ruled the Soviet Union from 1923 to 1953, and during this period of history, Soviet citizens

lived in fear of being accused of being a wrecker—an enemy of the people. Absolutely no one was immune to suspicion, and the price for doubt was incredibly high. During the time in which he reigned, Stalin commanded his State Security Officers to execute, imprison, or exile more than twenty million alleged spies, terrorists, or traitors, but for ten-year-old Sasha Zaichik, the Soviet Union seems "the most democratic and progressive country in the world." In a country where Comrade Stalin is viewed as the "father of all Soviet children," a young boy like Sasha is eager to become a member of the Young Soviet Pioneers, an organization that helps the government build a solid communist future.

Sasha shares a kitchen and toilet in a communal apartment with 48 people. He considers carrots delicacies. He lives in a city where residents are forced to line up for food rations, and bathroom stalls have no doors. Despite all of this, Sasha feels fortunate to be a Soviet citizen and expresses sorrow for children forced to live in capitalist countries. But the world Sasha understands and

loves takes a turn. During a 24-hour period, his father is arrested for being an enemy of the people, Sasha is thrown out of his family's apartment in the middle of the night, his only known relative refuses to take him in, and a senior lieutenant of the State Security asks him to serve as an informant. As these events unfold, young Sasha experiences fear and betrayal, and recognizes the ambiguities of his country's government.

Velchin's 2012 Newbery Honor Book provides a glimpse behind the Iron Curtain, and enables readers to experience the hardships, deceptions, and fears of Soviet citizens from the perspective of a child. Author notes provide thought-provoking personal and historical information, and readers can learn more about the Young Soviet Pioneers, Comrade Stalin, Lubyanka Prison, and Sasha's country, parents, and school by exploring www .breakingstalinsnose.com. (AB)



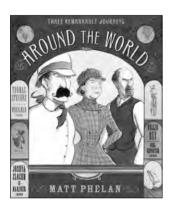
### Maximilian & the Mystery of the Guardian Angel: A Bilingual Lucha Libre Thriller

Written and illustrated by Xavier Garza Cinco Puntos Press, 2011, 207 pp., ISBN 978-1-933693-98-9

This bilingual novel is told from the perspective of

Maximilian, an 11-year-old who lives in San Antonio, Texas, and is a huge fan of Mexican wrestling. Maximilian's favorite wrestler is the Guardian Angel and while attending one of his fights, he slips over a guardrail and has an encounter with him. He eventually discovers that the Guardian Angel is a long-lost uncle. Garza captures the excitement of the wrestling matches with energetically descriptive passages. For example, while attending one wrestling match at which the main event will be a fight between the Guardian Angel and El Cavernario (prehistoric

caveman) and "his tag team partner, the chain-collar wearing Dog-Man Aguayo" (p. 58), the text reads, "The lucha libre show begins with a series of opening bouts that whet our appetites for the main event action. The most memorable match can only be described as a virtual 8.9 on the Richter scale. This is a bout of gargantuan proportions that sees the irresistible 402-pound man known as the Ton Jackson go toe-to-toe with the immovable 405-pound Big Bad Tamba. Both huge men do the impossible and take to the air as if they were featherweights" (pp. 59–60). This action-packed winner of a 2012 Pura Belpré Author Honor Award is sure to be a favorite with many students in the upper-elementary grades. (JM)



# Around the World: Three Remarkable Journeys

Written and illustrated by Matt Phelan Candlewick Press, 2011, 235 pp., ISBN 978-0-7636-3619-7

Matt Phelan's pencil, ink, gouache, and watercolor

illustrations tell the stories of three adventurers who navigated the globe during the 19th century— Thomas Stevens, Nellie Bly, and Joshua Slocum. Each first-person account conveys who they were outside the public spotlight and what motivated them to travel. In story one, Thomas Stevens, a coal miner, rode a high-wheel bicycle around the world. In most of the countries he visited, there were bicycle enthusiasts, yet cycling and touring hadn't caught on in the United States. After 13,500 miles he dismounted in Yokohama, Japan. In story two, fearless reporter Nellie Bly set off in 1889 to race around the world. As a way to sell more newspapers, the World newspaper sponsored her trip. She wrote articles about her voyage, inspiring young women and showing the unique possibilities of modern-day transportation. In story three, we meet retired sea captain Joshua Slocum,

the first person to encircle the globe in a sailboat. During his three-year adventure, he encountered treacherous squalls, gale winds, and pirates. He also experienced loneliness and hallucinations. This inspiring graphic novel brings to life three different tales in vivid illustrations and interesting text that merge history and fiction. (DD)



# Cleopatra Rules! The Amazing Life of the Original Teen Queen

Written by Vicky Alvear Shecter Boyds Mills Press, 2010, 128 pp., ISBN 978-1-59078-718-2

With contemporary comparisons such as, "Rome swallowed

up countries faster than most teens use up text minutes" (p. 8) and statements like, "Antony scurried out of Armenia faster than a Rollerblader careening downhill" (p. 75), reading about ancient history in this biography is fun and interesting. Hollywood, Shakespeare, and the Romans have all told different versions of Cleopatra's life, vet archaeological and scholarly research gives a different account of Egypt's last pharaoh. In short chapters, each phase of Cleopatra's life is described—from childhood to becoming queen at age 17, from life with Julius Caesar and Marc Antony to her spectacular death. Colorful photographs of Egyptian artifacts, historical paintings, and maps make this book attractive. Full-page sidebars offer additional historical information on topics such as brother-sister marriages, books on a stick, and the Julian calendar. Throughout the text, Shecter asks the reader questions that encourage critical thinking: "Was she beautiful?" (p. 26). (Throughout history, Cleopatra has been portrayed as a beautiful seductress, but silver coins show a sharp nose with thin lips.) "Does it really matter?" (p. 26). Readers soon realize that Cleopatra had charisma, charm, intelligence, power, and a visionary spirit.

Extensive endnotes, a timeline of Cleopatra's life, a glossary, a bibliography, and an index are included. (DD)

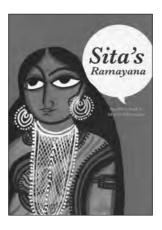


### Anya's Ghost Written and illustrated by Vera Brosgol First Second/Roaring

Brook Press, 2011, 221 pp., ISBN 978-59643-552-0

The mix of ghost story, graphic novel, and typical teen angst in Anya's Ghost makes for an appealing book for a

wide range of readers. Part of what makes this book such an impressive package is that it's a comic that features a contemporary teenage girl. As Anya struggles with her ethnic identity (she avoids the other Russian immigrant in school), body image, and the social order at her private prep school, the book incorporates classic young adult themes. Once Emily, the ghost from the title, enters the story, the pacing picks up, the plot thickens, and the book departs from the expected and veers into the supernatural and nightmarish. The "friendship" that develops between Emily and Anya will keep readers guessing about what the story here is really all about. Newcomer Brosgol's work features an ingenious blending of genres. The panel art features a familiar cartoon style, but the use of purple, gray, and black maintains the overall brooding mood of the story. The creative and varied page layout will be especially appreciated by fans of graphic novels. Aerial views and up-close perspectives set the stage with each turn of the page. (LC)



#### Sita's Ramayana Written by Samhita Arni Illustrated by Moyna Chitrakar

Groundwood Books. 2011, 152 pp., ISBN 978-1-55498-145-8

This book exposes readers to an ancient and probably unfamiliar Hindu poem. A genealogy web serves readers

well as they navigate the complex storyline. Two notes close the book—one devoted to the story. the other to the art. Extensive information is provided on female retellings of the Ramayana, firmly situating this text within a feminist narrative tradition. The note on Patua graphics describes how traditional Bengali scroll painting was adapted to the graphic novel format. This book presents elements of folklore and a specialized cultural form of art in a modern and accessible format. Queen Sita tells the story herself, describing her banishment, imprisonment, and eventual disappearance. Her strong voice captures the cost of war and the epic nature of this 3,000-year-old poem.

This graphic novel features some panel art, but page layout varies from double-page spreads to small scenes occupying only part of a page. The art and text work together: action is slowed by white space; pages drenched in red or black indicate dramatic shifts in mood; typography varies in speech boxes in a range of sizes. Sita's Ramayana expands the collection of world literature available to teachers, and young readers will find connections to stories they already know while embarking on an entirely new journey. (LC)

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