In keeping with the theme of this issue, we have selected books featuring characters in contexts where multiple languages are spoken, books written in multiple languages (about culturally specific topics such as lucha libre and salsa that meaningfully connect to the language), and books in which a second language is naturally interspersed throughout the text. Some of the languages featured in the books selected for this column include Spanish, Vietnamese, Filipino, and Mandarin Chinese. The books also range across multiple genres and subgenres (e.g., contemporary realistic fiction, historical fiction, memoir, counting book, etc.). We hope that readers of this column will, like the characters in many of the titles, truly value the richness of knowing, speaking, and understanding multiple languages.

How Hippo Says Hello!
Written by Abigail Samoun
Illustrated by Sarah Watts

The first entry in the Little Traveler series, this seven-inch-square board book positively highlights multilingualism and international travel as it introduces greetings expressed in eight languages. As Hippo travels the world, he meets others in France, Russia, Egypt, India, China, Japan, and Argentina before returning home to the United States. Each double-paged spread includes the storyline text to the left of the gutter and a cartoon illustration of the action to the right. The brief text stands out invitingly in a jaunty white font on solid-colored pages of bold red, bright orange, summery blue, and dusky seafoam. Each illustrated scene includes a speech bubble with the greeting given in the focal country’s language.

The book opens with “When Hippo says ‘Hello!’” and then we follow his adventures across the world. Hippo boards an airplane, greeting the smiling flight attendant with a cheerful “Hello!” In a café in Paris, France (location clue: the backgrounded Eiffel Tower), Hippo offers a friendly “Bonjour!” to the server. The left-hand-side text reads “He says ‘Bonjour!’ in France” and includes a basic phonetic spelling in brackets to support pronunciation. This pattern repeats for each subsequent language. The last double-paged spread depicts a world map showing Hippo’s travels.

Three other books in this series highlight expressions of common politeness through visits to the same countries. Each traveler starts from a different US region (San Francisco, Atlanta, Chicago) and experiences something new in each focal country. This is a must-read series! (KJM)

The Great and Mighty Nikko!
A Bilingual Counting Book
Written and illustrated by Xavier Garza

“Stop wrestling on the bed, Nikko!” “It’s not me, Mom. It’s the luchadores who are wrestling on my bed.” “Those are just toys, Silly.” “But it’s true.
They’ve turned my bed into a lucha libre ring!’ And so begins this story, told in English and Spanish, of Nikko, a vivacious youngster with a passion for lucha libre. The illustrations complement the story and add to its playfulness and humor. For example, in one instance, the pictures convey the divergent perspectives of Nikko and his mother. The page that reads “Those are just toys, Silly” features an up-close image of a child’s hand holding a wrestler. On the page that reads, “But it’s true . . . ;” there is a lucha libre ring with a fierce-looking wrestler standing on the ropes ready to fight. The color red dominates many of the images, conveying the action and energy of the luchadores and Nikko’s imaginary play. Each page features a number of luchadores, increasing by one all the way up to nine (e.g., “Help! Now there are five luchadores wrestling on my bed.”). Finally, Nikko joins the wrestlers (for a total of ten luchadores), defeats them all, and then dozes off because, “Even the king of lucha libre has to sleep once in awhile.” (JCM)

**Mango, Abuela, and Me**
Written by Meg Medina
Illustrated by Angela Dominguez

Abuela comes to live with Mia’s family so that Papi and Mami can take care of her after grandfather’s death. The colorful illustrations of ink, gouache, and marker show Mia and Abuela sharing a bedroom and communicating with pictures and objects because they speak different languages. Mia wishes her Español was better so that she could tell Abuela that she enjoys art and can run as fast as the boys at school. She also yearns to hear her grandmother’s stories from her homeland. When Mia doesn’t understand Abuela, her Mami reminds her that “things will get better.”

One day when they are making meat pies together, they decide to teach each other. Mia points to a ball and says, “Dough” and grandmother says, “Masa.” Then Mia remembers what her teacher did to help a new girl at school learn English. Mia makes word cards for every object in their home, including the telephone, pet hamster, and lamp, to help Abuela learn English. Eventually, the family purchases a pet parrot like the birds that lived in Abuela’s mango trees back home. Every day as Abuela and Mia practice Español and English, Mango the parrot learns, too. Pretty soon Abuela is reading picturebooks aloud and telling her stories to Mia. In turn, Mia is sharing about her “buen día” and showing her best “pintura of Mango.” This picturebook honors immigrant families as they learn new languages and cultures. The blend of Spanish and English words makes this a beautiful book to read aloud and discuss in primary grades. (DD)

**Chik Chak Shabbat**
Written by Mara Rockliff
Illustrated by Kyrsten Brooker

Experience Shabbat, diverse communities, and tradition in Mara Rockliff’s *Chik Chak Shabbat*. Every Saturday afternoon, the Jewish Sabbath, Goldie Simcha opens her home to the neighbors in her large apartment building. And every Saturday morning, Goldie Simcha’s neighbors revel in the delicious smell of Goldie preparing the evening’s meal, *cholent*—a slow-cooked stew prepared before Shabbat when lighting a fire is not permitted. When the savory *cholent* aroma does not waft out of Goldie’s kitchen one Saturday morning, her neighbors wonder what could be wrong. Things go awry until they uncover that Goldie is ill. So, right away her neighbors work together to create a Shabbat meal for her with their own ethnic foods. Indian potato curry, Korean barley tea, Italian pizza, and Spanish beans and rice complete the meal and continue their beloved tradition of bringing a community together around a table for a meal on a Saturday afternoon.
In one picturebook, readers will learn so much from Rockcliff—from the traditions of eating cholent and Shabbat preparations, to diverse families and dishes from around the world, to the concept of caring for one’s neighbors. Her storytelling paces readers evenly through the narrative and integrates some of the local language varieties in Goldie’s apartment building. Kyrsten Brooker’s oil paint and collage evoke a joyful mood as the muted and thick hues paint the scenes. The ethnic menu items, for example, stand out in collage, and details of traditional patterns and textures are reflected in the materials in their homes, such as the tablecloths, interior design, and dress. The book concludes with Goldie’s vegetarian cholent recipe. The recipe can be received as an invitation for all to share their culinary traditions and to make connections with others by communing around an inviting table on a regular basis. (AZ)

Salsa:
A Cooking Poem
Written by Jorge Argueta
Illustrated by Duncan Tonatiuh
Groundwood, 2015, unpaged,
ISBN 978-1-55498-442-8

“Ummm, it’s so delicious/this salsa./red salsa./It tastes like love.”
Salsa is Jorge Argueta’s latest addition to his growing collection of poems for cooking. In Spanish and in English, Argueta invites readers to taste, dance, and experience an indigenous, Salvadoran history and sauce. His prose evokes an ancient people and their tradition of preparing food and recalls the ways of the Nahua, Aztec, and Maya. Argueta’s poetry also establishes ties to nature and the earth, particularly in his descriptions of the tools and fresh ingredients, such as molcajetes, tejolote, limes, and cilantro, needed to make salsa. “Just like our ancestors we use the molcajete,/and while we make it we dance and sing salsa.” Two siblings appear to narrate the spicy recipe, and together they heat up the kitchen as they wash, peel, cut, and mix the fresh ingredients in their lava rock bowls. They even return the ingredient scraps to mother earth as compost so that she, “will keep dancing and singing salsa./giving us more lime trees./more tomatoes./red peppers./cilantro/and onions.”

Tonatiuh’s signature two-dimensional, illustrative style animates Arugueta’s verses with equal delight. The chiles, limes, tomatoes, onions, and fresh cilantro frame each full-page composition and at times appear larger in scale when in preparation. In browns, greens, and reds (the very tones of the ingredients), readers will be inspired to dance and make salsa themselves as they watch the siblings, their parents, and even their dogs move to the salsa rhythms. What results is a delicious cadence of history, poetry, food, and family. Salsa is a great companion to Tamalitos (2013) and Guacamole (2012) as they are each lyrical and visual displays of Latino heritage and culinary delights. Readers will immediately sense the vitality and spirit on every page, calling us all to similarly delight in salsa. (AZ)

Little White Duck:
A Childhood in China
Written by Na Liu
Illustrated by Andrés Vera Martínez
Graphic Universe, 2012, 108 pp.,

This striking graphic novel contains eight short stories about two sisters, Da Qin (Big piano) and Xiao Qin (Little piano) who grew up in China during the 1970s. The sisters go by their nicknames so that the bad spirits and luck will not find them. In the first story, Da Qin describes a somber day when Chairman Mao dies and her mother can’t stop crying. As a young child, she doesn’t understand what is happening, but she later learns that Communism helped her parents overcome sickness and poverty. In another story, titled “The Four Pests,” she explains the pests that plague China—the rat, the fly, the
mosquito, and the cockroach. Da Qin’s homework assignment is to fetch four rattails for her teacher. The sisters devise a couple of traps to bait the rats but can’t fathom cutting the tails off. Thankfully, their mother comes to the rescue.

The final story recalls when Da Qin and her father visit the poor village where he grew up. Her mother advises her to leave her beautiful coat with the little velvet duck at home, but she whines and gets her way. Da Qin plays with her cousins all day long and the artwork reveals, in muted greens, browns, and grays, that Da Qin’s duck is covered in muddy fingerprints. It turns out her cousins had never seen such a pretty coat and were fascinated by the soft duck. This stunning memoir closes with a glossary of Mandarin Chinese words, a timeline of Chinese history, a note from the author, a map of the region, and translations of the Chinese characters that are interspersed throughout the book. (DD)

**Blackbird Fly**

*Written by Erin Entrada Kelly*  

This agonizingly heart-wrenching and equally uplifting novel tells the story of 12-year-old Analyn “Apple” Pearl Yengko as she navigates life and school with help from the Beatles (more precisely, from their music and the memories it engenders), two classmates she comes to value and trust, and her music teacher. Eight years previously, Apple and her mother emigrated from the Philippines to Louisiana after Apple’s father’s death. All Apple has of her father’s is an old Abbey Road cassette tape, which feeds her Beatlemania. Apple is embarrassed by her mother’s cultural habits and English difficulties and is angry over her refusal to talk about Apple’s father. The personal and cultural divide between mother and daughter is large, represented in tangible ways by Apple’s mother’s steadfast refusal to allow Apple access to a guitar, which is killing Apple’s dream of being “the next George Harrison or John Lennon” (p. 7).

Author Erin Entrada Kelly deals candidly with a combination of racist and sexist bullying and with other types of ostracizing (e.g., fat shaming). Resolutions are neither quick nor easy, but are meaningful and realistic. Apple verbalizes internalized racism and sexism in ways that are difficult to read, but her experiences and expressions feel genuine as she makes good choices and bad, and as she slowly moves from confusion, anger, and self-deprecation to deeper understanding, appreciation, and empowerment. (KJM)

**Caminar**

*Written by Skila Brown*  

“I was still in my tree/Everything around me had shifted” (p. 80).

Carlos knows that as soldiers arrive with news of the Communist rebels, he must become a man, protect his village, and keep everyone safe. But Mamá urges him not yet—he’s still her boy with a face round like an owl. *Caminar* is Skila Brown’s promising debut novel in verse inspired by the tumultuous landscape of Guatemala’s Civil War. Carlos is introduced to readers as a young boy old enough to feed the chickens but not old enough to wring their necks. Yet as the novel proceeds, Carlos must quickly grow up as he faces the horrors of war and loss. Drawing from true events, Brown imbues Carlos’s narrative with facts that will teach middle grade readers about hope in the context of an under-examined and tragic time in history.

Spanish is thoughtfully used throughout, and a glossary of Spanish words is included. The end ties the main narrative to the present, and readers will close the book feeling hopeful. *Caminar* means to walk, and readers will walk in Carlos’s shoes and understand what it means to be brave. (AZ)
Listen, Slowly
Written by Thanhha Lai

This warm coming-of-age story offers a perfect blend of preteen angst, deep loss, and enduring love as it connects Vietnam, the United States, and family members to each other and to a difficult history. Twelve-year-old Mai (or Mia, as she is known at her Laguna Beach school) is looking forward to a summer of independence with no responsibility until she is drafted to accompany her surgeon father and her unassuming grandmother (Bá) to Viêt Nam. Her father travels annually to repair cleft palates and burn wounds in remote northern Viêt Nam. Mai is to accompany her grandmother to her extended family on a fact-finding mission into the wartime disappearance of Bá’s husband, Mai’s Ông, over 40 years ago.

Lai’s lyrical prose is honed to perfection in passages that radiate honest compassion. Interspersed throughout, Mai’s witty litany of suffering and droll commentaries are immensely entertaining. After all, who cannot identify with Mai’s exclamation: “I would be so pleasant if other people’s needs didn’t keep squashing mine” (p. 24). A very special book! (KJM)

Taking Hold: From Migrant Childhood to Columbia University
Written by Francisco Jiménez

In this fourth memoir by Francisco Jiménez, young readers will travel with him to Columbia University in New York City where he pursues a graduate degree. Throughout, Jiménez reflects back on his family’s journey from El Rancho Blanco, Mexico, to the fields in California where they picked strawberries, grapes, and cotton to make a living. He shares his struggles to learn English and the fact that he had to repeat first grade. These stories of poverty, learning English, and prejudice help readers understand his humble beginnings. Then Jiménez describes how lonely he feels in an unfamiliar city, missing his family and girlfriend, and how he watches the Vietnam War protests from his dorm window.

With the themes of courage, patience, determination, family, and love, this compelling memoir gives hope and inspiration to all readers, encouraging them to pursue their dreams. The back of the book includes photographs from his childhood and his time in New York City. (DD)

Jonda C. McNair is a professor of Literacy Education at Clemson University in South Carolina.
Deanna Day is an associate professor of Literacy and Children’s Literature at Washington State University in Vancouver, Washington. Karla J. Möller is an associate professor in the Curriculum and Instruction Department at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Angie Zapata is an assistant professor of Literacy Education at the University of Missouri–Columbia.

Please contact Grace Enriquez, the incoming department editor, at genrique@lesley.edu for questions related to submitting review materials.

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