

Diversity in Youth Literature Toolkit

LIS 5566 Multicultural
Literature for Children
and Young Adults

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	2
Collection Development.....	3
Module 3: Indigenous Culture Literature for Youth	
Group A Book Evaluation	6
Group A Book List.....	10
Module 4: African American/African/Black Literature for Youth	
Group B Book Evaluation	11
Group B Book List.....	14
Module 5: Asian/Pacific American Literature for Youth	
Group C Book Evaluation	15
Group C Book List.....	20
Module 6: European or Oceania/Australasian Literature for Youth	
Group D Book Evaluation	21
Group D Book List.....	23
Module 7: LGBTQIA+ Literature for Youth	
Group E Book Evaluation	24
Group E Book List.....	28
Module 8: Autistic Literature for Youth	
Group F Book List.....	29
Group F Promotion Activity.....	30

Introduction

Thank you for taking the time to read through my toolkit. I have enjoyed this semester of Multicultural Literature for Children and Young Adults. I especially loved looking at all the different websites that promoted books of the different cultures. I will definitely take those into consideration if I ever have the chance to order new books for the children's library. I have sent some of them to the head of that department where I work and she has promised to take some of them under consideration. I have always and will always work to bring diversity into the library for all children to have windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors.

Collection Development:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vxolaqbCd1g>



Introduction:

- A. Purpose: The purpose of developing this collection policy is to ensure that our library has a framework on how we wish to build and maintain a collection of materials that supports our mission and the needs of our patrons.
- B. Mission: The mission of the Monroe County Public Library is to deliver a broad range of resources, services, and programs that meet the educational, informational, and personal enrichment needs of the Keys community. (MCPL, 2025)
- C. Intellectual Freedom Policy: The library supports the individual's right to have access to ideas and information representing all points of view. The Board of Trustees has adopted the American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights, Freedom to Read, and Freedom to View statements, attached herewith (WV.gov, 2024): The freedom to read is guaranteed by the Constitution. Those with faith in free people will stand firm on these constitutional guarantees of essential rights and will exercise the responsibilities that accompany these rights. (ALA, 2006)

Overview of the Collection

- A. Here at the Monroe County Public Library we will focus more on a broad subject area to include all subjects into our collection
- B. The location of our collections will be housed in our five branches.

Responsibility for Collection Development.

- A. Library material selection is and shall be vested in the Director of Libraries of the Monroe County Public Library, and, under the Director of Libraries' direction, qualified members of the professional staff. Any such material or internet access selection shall be held to be selected by the Library (MCPL, 2025)

General Collection Policies

- A. Selection of library material is based on its value to members of the community. No library material access shall be excluded because of race, nationality, or the political or social views of the author or others contributing to their creation. The Library must be responsible to public suggestion of items and subjects to be included in the library collection. (MCPL, 2025)
- B. The Children's department will provide our patrons with materials necessary to aid in their educational and personal development.

General Selection Criteria

- A. Patron needs
- B. Current information for educational purposes
- C. Favorable Recommendations from professional personnel, or sources
- D. featuring all facets of our community
- E. Items in good condition
- F. Reputation and significance of the author/publisher
- G. Appropriate age level material for children ages 0-18

De-selection/weeding

- A. Weeding materials is a healthy and essential part of the collection development process. Materials will be discarded due to poor physical condition, outdated information, or lack of circulation.

Reconsideration of Library Materials (Challenge Procedure)

- A. The Monroe County Public Library believes that censorship is a purely individual matter and declares that while an individual is free to reject books and other information sources of which he or she does not approve, the individual cannot exercise this right of censorship to restrict the freedom of others to read, view, or hear. Parents have the responsibility to guide and direct the reading, viewing, and listening of their own minor children. The Library does not stand in loco parentis (MCPL, 2025).
- B. Library staff defends the principles of the freedom to read, view, or hear and declares all materials selected under this policy are considered constitutionally protected until they are determined unprotected by jurisdictional action (MCPL, 2025).

Policy Adopted: September 14th, 2025

References:

MCPL-Monroe County Public Library. (2025, July 30). *Monroe County Public Library Policy Manual*. Sourced from: <https://www.keyslibraries.org/post/policy-manual>

United States Census Bureau. (n.d.). *Monroe County, Florida*, a Retrieved January 27, 2025, from <https://data.census.gov/all?q=Monroe%20County%20florida>

ALA- American Library Association. (2006, July 26). "The Freedom to Read Statement" Sourced from: <https://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/freedomreadstatement>

ALA- American Library Association. (2006, June 30). "Library Bill of Rights" Sourced from:

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WV.gov- West Virginia Library Commission. (2024, March 26). "Collection Development: What to Include in the Policy" Sourced from:

<https://wvlguides.org/c.php?g=780693&p=5597195>

Module 3: Book Evaluation Group A-

Indigenous Culture Literature for Youth

Title: Fire Keepers Daughter

Author: Angeline Boulley

Illustrator: Moses Lunham

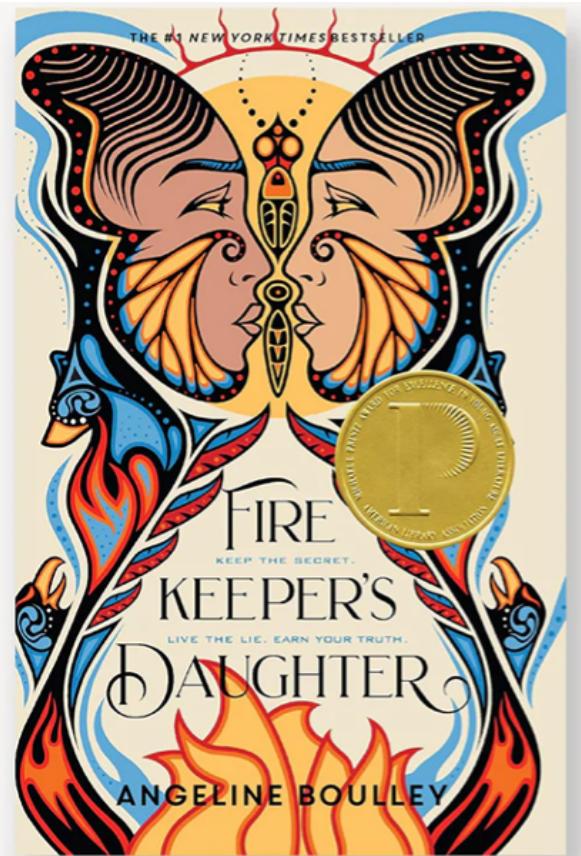
Publisher: Henry Holt & Company

Brief Summary

This book is about a half indigenous 18-19-year-old girl, Daunis Fontaine, coming to terms with growing up, racism, the death of her best friend, and her community in crisis over a drug epidemic. She witnesses the murder suicide of her best friend, Lily, and Lily's boyfriend Travis, which gets her involved in a drug investigation with the FBI. She becomes close to one of the FBI agents, only known as Jamie, who she ends up having a somewhat relationship with. The FBI needed her for her tribe and medicinal knowledge. It takes a scary turn and the culprit ends up being a group of guys she is very close to, including her half-brother. The book includes Indigenous culture like the importance of tribal elders, different types of ceremonies, traditional medicines and the inclusion of Anishinaabe language.

Cultural Analysis:

The cover of the book was illustrated by an Anishinabek artist, Moses Lunham. The two faces represent Daunis being biracial, the different skin tones, the fire represents her Firekeeper last name. The bear represents her clan, and the raven, message-bearer that is pointing her in the right direction. The artist says that he wanted the two animals morphing into the butterfly representing the young Daunis leaving childhood and emerging into adult life (AICL, 2021). There are no illustrations inside the book other than the little flames over the chapter numbers, which is appropriate because of the title of the book. The book is written very well. It does move between different languages, but they do translate new words into English. It was easy to follow and mostly conversational either between characters or in the main character's head.



The book was written by Angeline Boulley and according to her biography on the back jacket cover she is a member of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, the same as the main character of the book. The author is not only a member of the tribe she wrote about but also a former Director of the Office of Indian Education at the U.S. Department of Education. She also used to live on Sugar Island, in which a lot of the story takes place.

The timeframe of this book is pretty recent, taking place in 2004, so there are no historical references. The book says many times what the date is including on page 22 when it says: "Clearly, Lily agrees with everyone who's been yammering nonstop about the new Supe since the team for the 2004-2005 season was announced a week ago." The book does not include tribal resources such as links to tribal websites.

Most of the characters are regionally specific to the Ojibwe of Sugar Island. Jamie, the FBI agent and love interest for the main character, does not have a specific tribe, he claims Cherokee, but it is kind of implied that he was adopted and does not really know his true origin. Because the author was writing about her hometown and specific tribe everything is appropriate and in context. I want to caveat that by saying I am assuming because in the end I am an outside observer. I did not notice anything out of the ordinary thought. This also means that the language used to describe everything was very respectful and educational. The author uses the Anishinaabe language then translates it into English. Most of the time this is disguised as Daunis trying to teach Jamie about the culture he has just moved into, making it still conversational, like on page 53: "Will, I'll see you tomorrow morning... and, Jamie? Chi miigwech." *Big thank you.* This brings her culture not only to Jamie, but to you, the reader.

The only thing that gives me pause was wondering if she was talking about the drug use/addiction, being mean to women, and underage pregnancies from a place of experience or a place of stereotype. I know some literature perpetuates the stereotypes of indigenous people having an addictive personality, in this case several characters were addicted to meth, some having their kids live elsewhere because they couldn't take care of them. There was an underlying theme of promiscuity. According to Wikipedia Native American and First Nations women are frequently sexually objectified and are often stereotyped as being promiscuous. Such misconceptions lead to murder, rape, and violence against Native American or First Nations women and girls by mostly Native men and sometimes non-Native settlers (2025, Wikipedia). This played out in this book with the eventual sexualization of Daunis and her being sexually assaulted. I feel that because the author was from the same tribe maybe she did not mean for the themes to come across as being stereotypes but I could still see them a little and wonder what the young adults reading the book come away with. Do they come away with a great impression of the author's tribe, or do they come away thinking that Indigenous people specifically have these problems?

Since this book was written about the year 2004 the characters are all modern. The kids go to school, skip school, and play hockey. They have parties and drink. They spend time with their families. It is all very normal, until the plot makes it not. There is a town,

where mostly white, non-tribal people live and then Sugar Island where most of the Native people reside. The town is more urban with the hockey rink, school, college, and stores. Sugar Island is more rural with sprawling wilderness and limited cell service. The characters also have modern problems, such as drug use/abuse, relationship problems, death, illness, racism, and loss.

Conclusion:

The book was well written, and it did hold my attention, which is a great feat lately with all I have going on in my personal life. If this came across my desk as a children's librarian would I purchase it? Probably. I like that it does not have the typical stereotypes of Native Americans. I like that it teaches you about the culture and the language of the Author's people. I am having a hard time with the not Native content in making a full recommendation. I am struggling with what age group I would put this book at. The kids are all around 17-19 years old in it, but does that fact alone make it a YA book? According to the Professional Writing Academy: YA novels are as diverse as their readership. However, there are several key elements that most YA novels share.

- A teenage protagonist, usually aged 15-18.
- Written from the point of view of a teenager (or more than one, in novels with multiple points of view), rather than an adult looking back on their teenage years.
- A relatable, authentic emotional experience.
- Coming of age themes, such as discovering who you are, finding the confidence to be yourself, challenging authority, or standing up for what you believe in.
- More mature content, including drug use, mental health, relationships and sex and sexuality (although in YA the content is usually less graphic than in New Adult or adult fiction). (Dixon, 2023)

In this book the point of view is from the protagonist, Daunis, who starts off 18, but turns 19. There are relatable authentic emotional experiences, such as her feelings for Jamie. There are coming of age themes, she does discover what she wants to be, and finds the confidence to join the tribe, and stand up for what she believed in by joining the FBI investigation. She also bucks the authority of the FBI because she knows that they are just there to solve a case, and she wants to heal her community. Point E is where I take issue with the book being YA. This book delved more into drug use than so and so smoked weed. Not only are people addicted to meth, selling meth, dying from meth, the FBI teaches the main character how to make meth. There was a sexual assault that came out of nowhere. There was a murder suicide that was witnessed by the main character. I would not really recommend this book for anyone under 18, especially without a trigger warning on the book. I really wish this book had a trigger warning and truthfully I might not have read it had I known about the huge meth references and the sexual assault. This does not mean that I would keep others from reading it. I would recommend this as being a New Adult fiction (NA). I wish our library had this classification and by reading the article from the Professional Writing academy is the

first time I had even heard of it. NA is aimed at an audience who are transitioning out of adolescence into adulthood and have moved on from YA fiction. The protagonists in NA fiction are usually 18/19 or in their early 20s. Themes may be more mature or graphic than in YA, and the focus is often on the transition to independent adulthood e.g. leaving home for the first time, going to college/university or getting a job, and navigating the challenges of relationships, mental health and sexuality and gender identity (Dixon, 2023).

As you can see, I have many mixed feelings on this book. I liked the language lessons, I liked learning about the culture of the Ojibwe, and thought the book flowed and was well written. I did not like the drug references, especially meth. I have lost people in my personal life to meth and have watched my own community in my Kentucky hometown succumb to the evils of it. I really do not appreciate surprise sexual assault aspect of this or any other book. I know it is a part of life and should not be swept under a rug, but that does not mean I need to disturb my own peace by reading it. I would recommend this to be in my collection of a library, and in fact it is in my children's library as a book club in a bag kit. I might look more into the kit after reading it and see if they at least put a warning on the kit materials.

References:

Dixon, Fiona (2023, October 20) *What is Young Adult Fiction?* Professional Writing Academy. Sourced from: <https://www.profwritingacademy.com/what-is-young-adult-fiction>

Stereotypes of Indigenous peoples of Canada and the United States (2025, July 19) from Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stereotypes_of_Indigenous_peoples_of_Canada_and_the_United_States [Links to an external site.](#)

AICL American Indians in Children's Literature (2021, May 3). *Highly Recommended! FIREKEEPER'S DAUGHTER by Angeline Boulley* <https://americanindiansinchidlrensliterature.blogspot.com/2021/05/highly-recommended-firekeepers-daughter.html#:~:text=Since%20the%20Woodland%20style%20is,my%20mom%20with%20her%20iPad!>

Module 3: Book List Group

A- Indigenous Culture Literature for Youth

Top 5 Books for Middle and High Schoolers On Indigenous Culture



01 **Warrior Girl Unearthed**
Angeline Boulley
Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians
Picked from the list "Young Adult: Life on Reservations" by Indigenous Reads Rising
Written by an Indigenous author and about an Indigenous character.

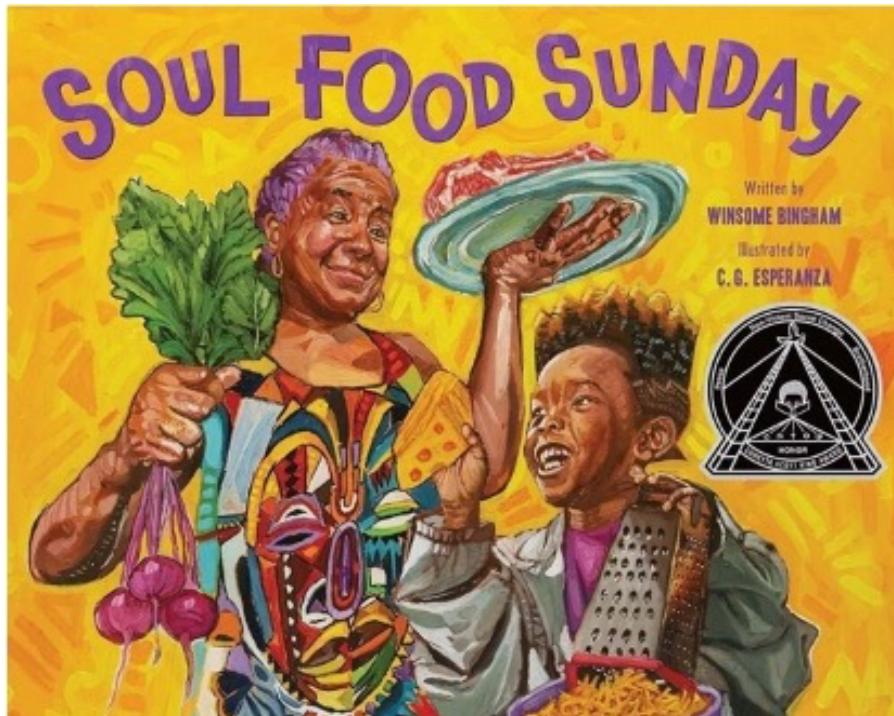
02 **Apple: Skin to the Core**
Eric Gansworth
Onondaga Nation
Picked from the list "Young Adult: Learning from Ancestors" by Indigenous Reads Rising
Written by an Indigenous author and about an Indigenous character.

03 **Four Faces of the Moon**
Amanda Strong
Michif/Métis
Picked from the list "Young Adult: Learning from Ancestors" by Indigenous Reads Rising
Written by an Indigenous author and about an Indigenous character.

04 **Buffalo Dreamer**
Violet Duncan
Plains Cree and Taino from Kehewin Cree Nation
Picked from the list for Middle Grades from the American Indians in Children's Literature's year in review: 2024. Written by an Indigenous author and about an Indigenous character.

05 **Rez Ball**
Byron Graves
Ojibwe and Lakota
2024 American Indian Youth Literature Award Winner from the American Indian Library Association.
Written by an Indigenous author and about an Indigenous character.

Module 4: Book Evaluation Group B- African American/African/Black Literature for Youth



Title: Soul Food Sunday

Author: Winsome Bingham

Illustrator: C.G. Esperanza

Publisher: Abram Books for Young Readers

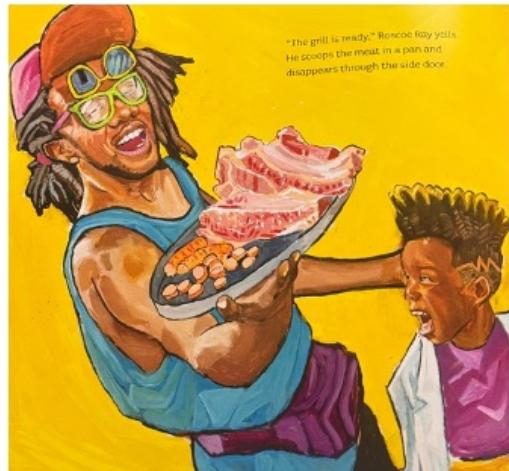
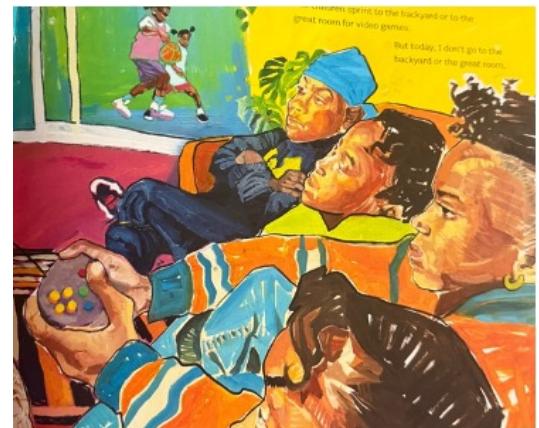
Brief Summary

Our narrator, only called "Baby" by his Granny, is finally old enough to help with cooking the family meal for Soul Food Sunday. Granny puts his grandfather's army chef coat on him and has him come into the kitchen. Baby works really hard on the meal and when Granny goes to take a nap, she tells him to go play but he makes sweet tea instead!



Cultural Analysis:

The cover of the book has a picture of "Baby" and his Granny with some of the items they will be cooking in the book. The illustrator C.G. Esperanza in an interview said he modeled the place and people in the book after his uncle's house in New Jersey. He was even naming the cousins playing video games on page 8, and the girl playing basketball in the background. I was discussing the art with someone earlier and I thought it was weird that somethings are hyper focused while others are blurry or undefined. The artist addressed this somewhat in the interview by saying that when the author wrote a whole line on Granny's apron that the apron had to be a character in itself (Abrams Books, 2021). The character Roscoe Ray is an amalgamation of the illustrator and his uncle. If you watch the interview, and if you liked the book I highly recommend that you do, you will see the resemblance between the illustrator and Roscoe



Ray. Overall the illustrations were vibrant and went along with the story. When they talked about greens, the illustration had greens, when they talked about grating cheese, the character was grating cheese.

The writing was simple, due to it being a picture book, but it was also complex in its writing. The author said in the interview that she wrote this book in 2012 and it just sat in a draft, then when she went to a writing conference she didn't have a chapter book for them to look at so she asked if they could look at Soul Food Sunday, and the person that read it immediately wanted to publish it (Abrams Books, 2021). There is a regional dialect that is designed to remind the reader that there is a cultural background, but it does not come off derogatory. An example would be on page 16 where Granny says, "Greens is next" or on page 17 where she says, "Greens got to be clean, baby."

The characters in this book are all a family but there is diversity in the ages. There is a Granny, mommas, pappas, aunts and uncles, nieces, nephews and a whole lot of cousins, according to page 3. They all meet at Granny's house for Soul Food Sunday every week. When I listened to the interview of the author it was kind of sad. She said that black kids can't roam the world like other children, it is not safe, so she

wanted to write a book about where it was safe for black kids to be kids (Abrams Books, 2021). She said family is safe, and the book takes place in a safe environment. The characters in the background of the illustrations may not all be known or named but you can see they are happy and part of the family.

The book centers around the making of each soul food item and how to properly prepare and cook them. This is culturally significant to this family, and the little boy is so happy to be able to learn how to cook for his family for the first time. The fact that it is a boy learning how to cook is what sets this book apart from many others. The author has a son and was very vocal in her interview on how boys will someday be men and need to know how to do things on their own (Abrams Books, 2021). I did like that there was a recipe for mac 'n' cheese at the end of the book, it looks super yummy, too bad I can't have it.

The purpose of this book was to be a mirror for children, like the author's own son, to be able to see their families and their traditions being honored in a fun way. The author poured her soul into the writing and the illustrator picked that up and ran with it. The illustrator was brought back to his own childhood and brought the author's vision to life. This book will be a window for other children to be able to see what it is like to cook for Soul Food Sunday, and even a sliding glass door with the addition of the recipe so you can step into the story.

Conclusion:

I do recommend this book for any age. It might be made for younger kids ages 4-8, but I enjoyed it, and I think younger kids could follow along to the pictures and the joy of the book. I do not have any reservations, at first, I did not like the art style as much, but after listening to the illustrator it was like a lightbulb moment, and I understood what he was going for. I think kids of all ages would enjoy it, and I would buy it for my library.

References:

Abrams Books. (2021, November 8). Beyond the Book with Winsome Bingham & C. G. Esperanza Sourced from: YouTube <https://youtu.be/Y6i39s5hZCA?si=NvXjNhFNIIA3-IR0>
[Links to an external site.](#)

Module 4: Book List Group B- African American/African/Black Literature for Youth

Top 5 Books for Middle and High Schoolers African American/African/Black Literature

01 **Black Girl You are Atlas**
Renée Watson

Picked from the list "Best of the Best 2024 9th Grade-12th Grade" by Black Caucus American Library Association.
Written by a Black author and about a Black character.

02 **Flamboyants: The Queer Harlem Renaissance I Wish I'd Known**
George Matthew Johnson

Picked from the list "Best of the Best 2024 9th Grade-12th Grade" by Black Caucus American Library Association.
Written by a Black author and about Black characters.

03 **Twenty-four Seconds from Now**
Jason Reynolds

Picked from the list "2025 Winners and Honors" by The Coretta Scott King Book Awards.
Written by a Black author and about a Black character.

04 **Black Star**
Kwame Alexander

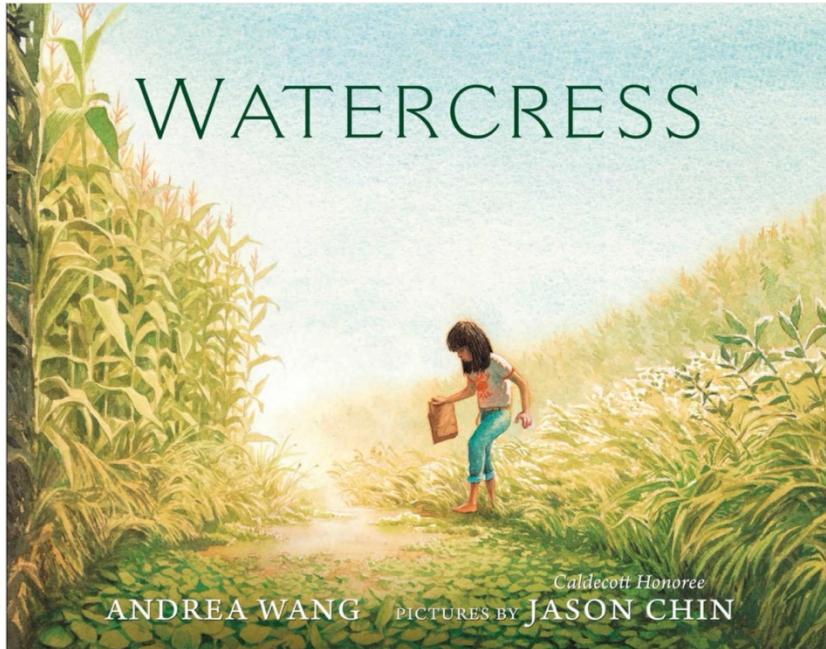
Picked from the list "2025 Winners and Honors" by The Coretta Scott King Book Awards.
Written by a Black author and about a Black character.

05 **In the Key of Us**
Mariama J. Lockington

Picked from the blog "Generations Book Club: LGBTQIA Pride" by the Brown Bookshelf.
Written by a Black author and about Black characters.

Module 5: Book Evaluation Group C-

Asian/Pacific American Literature for Youth



Title: Watercress

Author: Andrea Wang

Illustrator: Jason Chin

Publisher: Neal Porter Books

Brief Summary:

While riding in her parent's old beat-up car along the cornfields of Ohio a young girl's parents spot watercress growing in a ditch. They all get out of the car to gather it. The girl is ashamed of having to gather the plant on the side of the road, it reminds her of hand me down clothes and roadside trash-heap furniture, while it reminds her parents of China and home. She doesn't want to eat it and her mother shows her a picture of an uncle we assume died of hunger and she decides to eat it and make new memories of watercress.

Cultural Evaluation:

There is literary merit, it has quality writing, a nice setting a plot you can follow, and a nice conclusion. This book is written simple, as it is for children ages 4-8. The language is in simple English, there are no words in any other language, the conversation does not give any hint to a dialect, which means it is not hard to understand or does not hold any stereotypes.

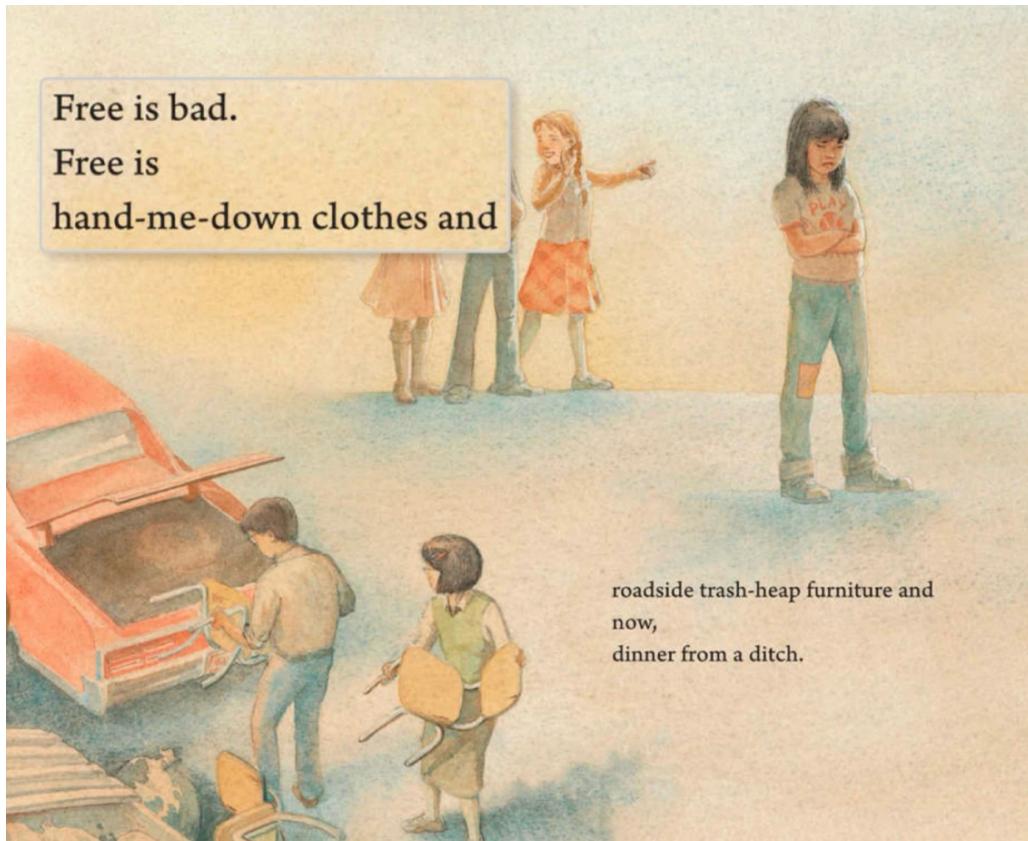


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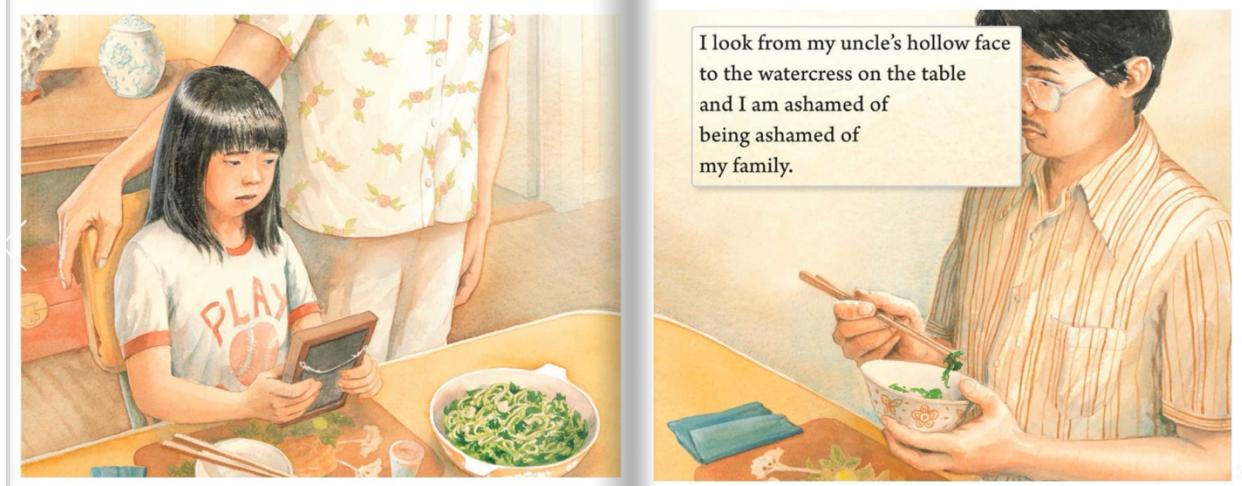
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The characters are all a family consisting of Chinese immigrant parents and two children. The main character is not named but we assume it is a girl. No where in the actual text does it give our main character a specific gender, but the description on the jacket cover says "young girl," and if you look at the illustrations she has a more feminine body structure and longer hair than her brother. There are not really any other characters in this book except the family. You only see other people in a passing car or when she is talking about hand me down clothes. The other characters seem to be white, and ones that the main character doesn't want them to see her picking watercress or the original owners of the hand me down clothes. So the only diversity of actual characters would be the age difference in the parents and the children of the same family.

By the end of the book the main character does show emotional growth. At the beginning she was ashamed of her family. She didn't want anyone to recognize her while they were picking the watercress. She didn't want to eat the meal because it was Free, and free reminds her of hand me down clothes and trash-heap furniture.



Then her mother opens up about her life in China a small amount, which she normally never talks about. This is something that the author and the illustrator reiterate that this is a common problem among their families as well, the unwillingness of their parents to talk about their former lives. The author says that if she had known about the hardships her parents had faced perhaps, she would have been more compassionate to them as a child. So I am assuming that this book is a semi love letter to the author's parents especially when the character says "I am ashamed of being ashamed" on page 24



The setting of the book is mostly in rural Ohio. Only the memories take place in China. There is no real timeline, it could have happened in the 1970's or it could have happened yesterday. This timelessness will allow children to be able to put themselves in the shoes of the young girl. We have all been embarrassed by our parents at some point in life, this is a universal childhood experience. The clothing was modern, even the memory pictures have the mom's family in button up shirts and pants, no traditional clothing, which I feel brings more realism. The family is poor, but it does not feel stereotypical, as I am from a state over from Ohio, and in rural areas there are poor people of all races and religions.

The illustrations are beautiful and very detailed. They are very artistic and according to the artist himself describes the illustrations are creating a dreamlike quality being in line with the book being memory based. They are done in watercolor because it is common to both Chinese and western art. One of the iconic images is the switch from corn to bamboo. "As I was painting I started to consider the similarities between corn and bamboo, and how they are both grasses so they share some similarities in form, and they are also iconic plants of American and Chinese culture. I decided to explore ways in which I could use them as a motif in the book—corn to symbolize America and Bamboo, China. This is where the spread of the corn morphing into bamboo came from" (Schuit, 2021).



Conclusion:

I hate to admit this, but this book made me tear up. I would highly recommend it to be bought in my library. I know it is written to be a mirror for Chinese Americans but like I said earlier I think this book is a giant sliding glass door. Everyone has been embarrassed of something their family does and then later, especially when they found out why their family did what they did the way that they did, they felt shame of the shame in their family. This book may be written for younger ages but it carries the message of family for all.

*Remember, some memories can be delicate and slightly bitter.



References:

Schuit, Mel (2021, May 11). Let's Talk Illustrators #177: Jason Chin. Let's Talk Picture Books; Children's book design & illustrations. Sourced From: <http://www.letstalkpicturebooks.com/2021/05/lets-talk-illustrators-177-jason-chin.html>

Module 5: Book List Group C-

Asian/Pacific American Literature for Youth

Top 5 Books for Middle and High Schoolers Asian/Pacific American



02

Lunar New Year Love Story •••

Gene Luen Yang and LeUyen Pham

Picked from the list "2024-2025 Awards Winners" by the Asian Pacific American Librarians Association.
Written by and about.



04

Chisland •••

Guoping Ren

Picked from the list "2025 CALA Best Book Award Recipients" by the Chinese American Librarians Association.
Written by and about.



••• 01 Everything We Never Had Randy Ribay

Picked from the list "2024-2025 Awards Winners" by the Asian Pacific American Librarians Association.
Written by and about.



••• 03 Dragonfruit

Makiia Lucier

Picked from the list "2024-2025 Awards Winners" by the Asian Pacific American Librarians Association.
Written by and about.



••• 05 In Limbo

Deb JJ Lee

Picked from the list "2023-2024 Awards Winners" by the Asian Pacific American Librarians Association.
Written by and about.

Module 6: Book Evaluation Group D- European or Oceania/Australasian Literature for Youth

Title: Elizabeth Queen of the Seas

Author: Lynne Cox

Illustrator: Brian Floca

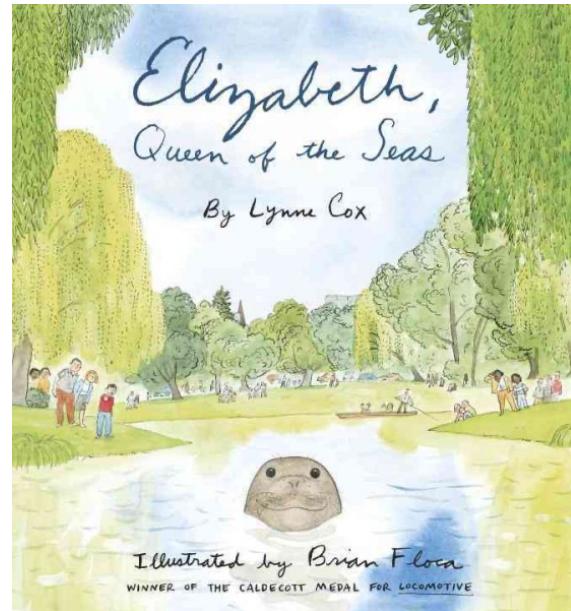
Publisher: Schwartz and Wade Books

Brief Summary: This is book based on a true story of an elephant seal who instead of living in the ocean took up residence in the city of Christchurch, New Zealand, in the Avon River. Elizabeth loved to lay in the street to sun herself and the townspeople decided they didn't want her to get hurt so they tried, in vain, to move her out to sea. Each time they moved her no matter how far they took her she came back until the people in the town decided that she was home and put up a "Slow, elephant seal crossing" sign to protect her and left her alone.

Cultural Evaluation:

Does this book have Literary merit? Yes, it has a lovely setting and style. The plot was based on a true story so that gives it more merit. I am not sure an elephant seal living in a city would be as feasible without the real story behind it and referenced. Not that it would matter for a fiction story.

This story's use of the English dialect felt more American to me, probably because the author is an American. I noticed no slang or any words I did not recognize. This is great for it being free of the derogatory connotations and stereotypes we think of when we think of Australia and New Zealand speech. I think if you did try to put the accent in the text it would come out as a mockery of the language.



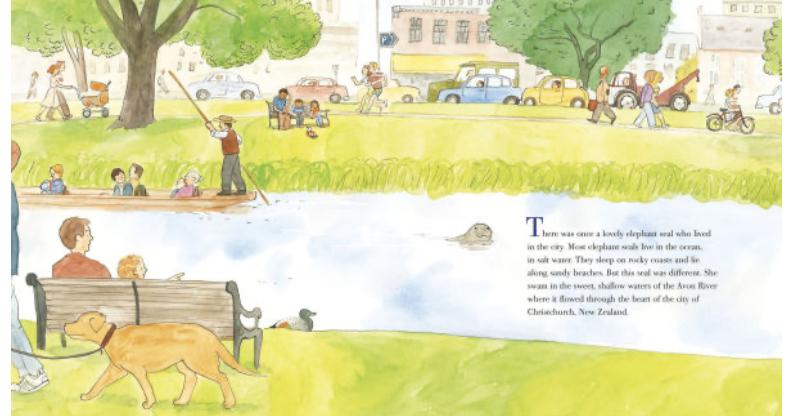
The Characters in the book are Elizabeth, the seal, a boy named Michael, and the towns people. There is not much diversity in the background characters with most of them being white. Occasionally like on the first page you can see a family on the park bench that is not white, but there are not many other background characters that are diverse in the illustrations. Speaking

of illustrations as you can see they are bright and colorful and evoke the charm of the elephant seal with her cute face. It is very artistic and compliments the text very well. Although I did not like that most of the illustrated background characters were white the artist did do a good job of making people different ages, shapes, and genders.

If you read the author's notes at the beginning of the book you note that when they were traveling to New Zealand they talked to a real boy named Micheal, just like in the story, who told them the story of Elizabeth, Queen of the Seas. I do like that at the end the author included a picture of the real Elizabeth and included some facts about elephant seals. They also included two websites to learn more about elephant seals.

Conclusion:

This is a cute book that I would recommend for a library to get for all ages that enjoy picture books. The book is for ages 4-8, but due to the fact that it is based on a true story, and the colorful pictures I think any age would enjoy it. I am not sure that it depicts the culture of New Zealand, but it does provide a story set there. The only thing I did not like about this story was the cursive writing any time Michael spoke. I always fight against cursive writing especially in my job as I feel it is not inclusive. It is another hurdle for non-English speakers, and there is an entire generation of people that never learned to read it. Other than that, I loved it and loved that the people let the elephant seal be in the end.



There was once a lovely elephant seal who lived in the city. Most elephant seals live in the ocean, in the cold, rocky waters, swimming along sandy beaches. But this seal was different. She swam in the sweet, shallow waters of the Avon River where it flowed through the heart of the city of Christchurch, New Zealand.



There in the water beneath the bridge was the beautiful elephant seal who weighed as much as fifteen Labrador retrievers.
Welcome home, Elizabeth!
Michael shouted.



Elizabeth looked at him with her dark brown eyes, snorted once, and once again.

Module 6: Book List Group D- European or Oceania/Australasian Literature for Youth

Top 5 Books for Middle and High Schoolers Australia

01 **••• I'm Not Really Here**
Gary Lonesborough

Picked from the list "Book of the Year Award: Older Readers" by the Children's Book Council of Australia. Written by and about.

02 **••• Birdy**
Sharon Keroal

Picked from the list "Book of the Year Award: Older Readers" by the Children's Book Council of Australia. Written by and about.

03 **••• Into the Mouth of the Wolf**
Erin Gough

Picked from the list "Book of the Year Award: Older Readers" by the Children's Book Council of Australia. Written by and about.

04 **••• Completely Normal**
Biffy James

Picked from the list "Presenting the 2023 CBCA Book Of The Year Award, Winner And Honour Books" by the Children's Book Council of Australia. Written by and about.

05 **••• The Other Side of Tomorrow**
Hayley Lawrence

Picked from the list "Presenting the 2023 CBCA Book Of The Year Award, Winner And Honour Books" by the Children's Book Council of Australia. Written by and about.

Module 7: Book Evaluation

Group E- LGBTQIA+ Literature for Youth

Title: Flamer

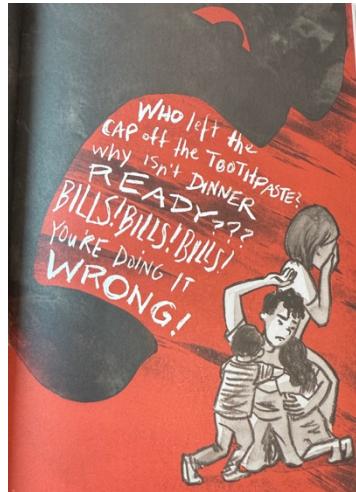
Author/Illustrator: Mike Curato

Publisher: Henry Holt and Company

Brief Summary:

This graphic novel is about a boy named Aiden who is just coming out of middle school and learning a lot about

himself, his body, and his sexuality. Aiden is from a rough home life where he is a parentified older sibling to not only his twin brother and sister, but to his mother as well. He is also bullied in school for being gay, although at that time he does not define himself as such. He never comes out and says this, but he has religious trauma that keeps him from becoming his authentic self. This book takes place at a camp, with flashbacks to his home, church, and school life, where Aiden realizes something about himself that will change his life.



Cultural Evaluation:

This was a graphic novel and yes it has literary merit. The writing was on par for the middle school/early high school age group that it was written for. The setting was explained as well as drawn. The story had a very believable plot and was easy to follow. This book has a lot of derogatory slang for the LGBTQIA+ community, but in this case it was used as a plot device and to remind the reader how not to speak. It was mainly used by the bullies and was quite often repelled by the "good" characters. This is to let the reader know that if you don't want to be a bully to not speak to others that way.

There is a main character, Aiden, and then some minor characters. I would say out of all the books I read this semester I was surprised that the graphic novel characters had the most development. Aiden is going through changes in his views and sexuality, and others are dealing with it and grown as either friends or bullies. This development is

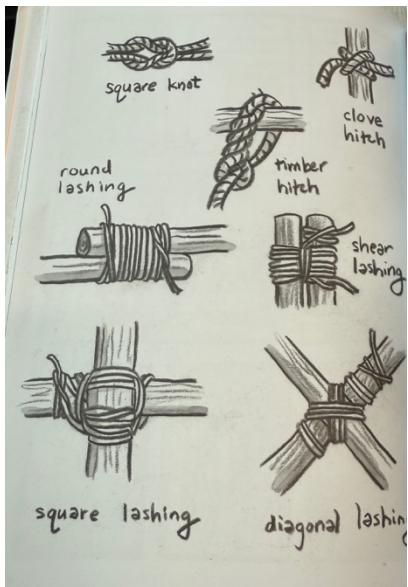
anything but simple. The main character is the only one that is identified as being half Asian, a Filipino American, we assume that all the other characters are white or white presenting. There is another councilor that we find out later is gay, and he is represented as the cool councilor, the one that Aiden resonates with and tries to emulate, until a bully pulls his hair.

The background of the story is at camp. Camp is the one place in the past that Aiden has ever had peace, but not this year. This year all the boys are going through puberty, including him, and his peace is being interrupted. I do love that the author writes and

draws about things you learn at camp, like on page 64 it is all about the different names and drawings of knots. I used to work in recreation at a state park, and this was very relevant to what I have taught in the past. The teaching of the different parts of the bow in archery was the same, since I have taught archery before as well. The time period is not really known, they do not go into a year, it could almost be any modern time from the 1980s until now, since at camp there is no technology. The only real clue is the fact that Aiden has a pen pal, and most kids these days do not, but it is still possible, and that the pen pal says the phone call costs a lot of money when she calls Aiden. I would say this is

around the 1990s, and upon further research yes, it was set in 1995. The lifestyle is very realistic as someone who has gone to camp many times, there are tents and fire pits, considering this is a semi biographical account of the author's own life, it is pretty spot on.

Since this is a graphic novel, the entire book is nothing but illustrations. They are mostly in black and white with only the fire being in color. The fire doesn't necessarily mean just the campfire, light, or candles. It is also red/orange when there is hurt, anger, or love, fire from within. The more intense the color the bigger the feeling the author is trying to infer. This was prevalent in the scene on page 244 where Aiden realizes he has feelings for his tent mate, Elias. The red/orange is so bright in his chest, feelings, that it is almost white. This technique was also used in the suicide attempt scene where everything goes black and then flames. The author/illustrator did an excellent job on their use of color.



Some of the illustrations are excellent in their detail and some are simplistic, but as a whole it was like the writing, the illustrations were for that age group of late middle to early high school. Each character was unique enough that you could even pick them out of the crowd even if they were a background character in the scene. All of the other boys were tall and slim, making for little diversity but it was to emphasize the way that Aiden felt he was chubby and stood out as different. I thought it was easy to follow and had a powerful message.

Conclusion:

I chose this book back at the beginning of the semester because my brother-in-law, who is on his school's Board of Education, was talking about some parent, or group, that brought this book up to the Board for banning. This is a northern state, one that I would think was more progressive than book banning. I too have had people bring me this book and the book *Gender Queer* to the children's desk to rant on and on about how they need to be pulled from the shelves and how horrible it is for us to... blah blah blah. I quietly listen to their concerns, put the book to the side, and tell them I will take it under consideration. When they leave I put it back on the shelf. If there was a legitimate concern for the book and not someone just wanting talking points we have a form they can fill out for a formal request, I have offered those before but of course not many want to do their due diligence. I took another class a few semesters back that talked about banning books, and the one thing I took away from that and changed my mind a little on the subject, because let's be clear I am anti book banning, but I was reminded that it is not my fight to have, people have their own opinions and because I work in a PUBLIC library the public does get a say in what we put on the shelves. This is why having a strong collection development policy is important.

After reading this book I see that it is not for a younger audience. It is definitely a YA book, which is why it is classified as one. I also picked it because I was challenging myself because I am not a graphic novel fan, I think they are beautiful and valid reading materials, just not for me personally. I did manage to make it through it and I do see that some of the language is "vulgar" but as a former middle school teacher it is pretty spot on, and if parents don't think their kids are saying this type of thing in school or with their friends, they are not paying attention. I have a son that is 16, 17 next week, and listening to him and his friends is close to this, but his friend group includes LGBTQIA+ individuals, so it is not as bad as the book's bully speech, but it is still pretty vulgar. I don't say anything to him, unless he pops off with something horrible, nor would I say anything about the speech in this book because I live in reality and realize this is how middle schoolers talk when they think the teachers are not listening, sometimes even when they are.

There is a scene that gets pretty dark and implies suicide, but I do think the author did this in a way of reminding the reader that the way adults talk about people that are different really influences how kids feel about themselves. The cover of the book says "This book will save lives." I didn't know what they meant by that, until I was just typing this statement. Hopefully the teens that read this book can use this as either a mirror to

see themselves and their situation as valid and something to be celebrated and not be ashamed of, or as a window/sliding glass door into a world that you don't know anything about but can see how the person feels the way they do and they can develop empathy and not be the bullies that they see in the book.

Would I pick this book for my library? Well, considering it is already in my library and I have defended it before, I would say yes. I think it has a powerful message that teens would benefit from reading. On the other hand this book is not for everyone and I can see why people have had an issue with it. But it is for someone, and like the cover of the book says, "This book will save lives."

References:

<https://scholarworks.uni.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1136&context=universitas>

Module 7: Book List Group E-

LGBTQIA+ Literature for Youth

Top 5 Books for Middle and High Schoolers
LGBTQIA+ EDITION

01

Mallory in Full Color
Elisa Stone Leahy

Picked from the list "Congratulations 2025 Lammy Award Winners: LGBTQ+ Middle Grade" by Lambda Literary Foundation.
Written by and about.

02

Flamboyants: The Queer Harlem Renaissance I Wish I'd Known
George Matthew Johnson

Picked from the list "Best of the Best 2024 9th Grade-12th Grade" by Black Caucus American Library Association.
Written by and about.

03

Icarus
K. Ancrum

Picked from the list "Congratulations 2025 Lammy Award Winners: LGBTQ+ YA" by Lambda Literary Foundation.
Written by and about.

04

Canto Contigo
Jonny Garza Villa

Picked from the list "Stonewall Book Awards List" by The American Library Association.
Written by and about.

05

In the Key of Us
Mariama J. Lockington

Picked from the blog "Generations Book Club: LGBTQIA+ Pride" by the Brown Bookshelf.
Written by and about.

Module 8: Book List Group F- Autistic Literature for Youth

Top 5 Books for Middle and High Schoolers
Autism Books for Youth

01 **At the End of Everything**
Marieke Nijkamp

Picked from the list "Children's and Teen Literature Featuring Autistic Characters" by xMinds.

Written by and about.

02 **Do You Know Me?**

Libby Scott & Rebecca Westcott

Picked from the list "Children's and Teen Literature Featuring Autistic Characters" by xMinds.

Written by and about.

03 **The Fire, the Water, and Maudie McGinn**
Sally J. Pla

Picked from the list "Children's and Teen Literature Featuring Autistic Characters" by xMinds.

Written by and about.

04 **The Many Mysteries of the Finkel Family**
Sarah Kapit

Picked from the list "Children's and Teen Literature Featuring Autistic Characters" by xMinds.

Written by and about.

05 **The Ojja-Woja**
Magdalene Visaggio

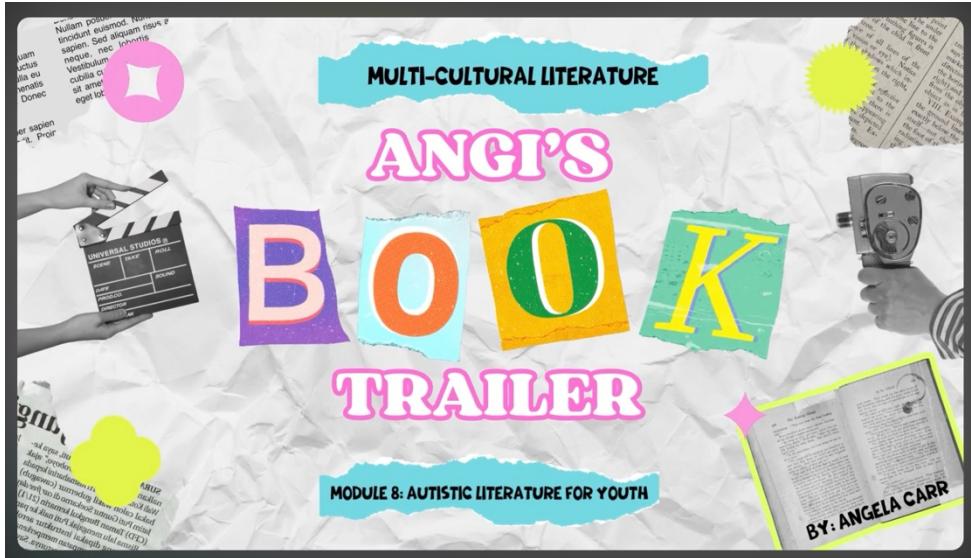
Picked from the list "Children's and Teen Literature Featuring Autistic Characters" by xMinds.

Written by and about.

Module 8: Promotion Activity Assignment

Group F- Autistic Literature for Youth

<https://youtu.be/e6sxyQSKG7M>



I chose to do a video trailer on:

Title: A Day with No Words

Author: Tiffany Hammond

Illustrator: Kate Cosgrove

Publisher: Wheat Penny Press

Helpful Resource:

<https://xminds.org/autism-literature>

