

# Mirrors -and- Windows...

LITERATURE WHERE CHILDREN SEE THEMSELVES AND OTHERS



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My name is Jonda C. McNair, and I am a professor of Literacy Education at Clemson University. I specialize in literature intended for youth, and I am pleased to create this newsletter with the purpose of promoting and highlighting quality books for children in grades kindergarten through 6. In an article titled “Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors,” Rudine Sims Bishop (1990) wrote:

*Books are sometimes windows, offering views of worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange. These windows are also sliding glass doors, and readers have only to walk through in imagination to become part of whatever world has been created or recreated by the author. When lighting conditions are just right, however, a window can also be a mirror. Literature transforms human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection we can see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience. Reading, then, becomes a means of self-affirmation, and readers often seek their mirrors in books. (p. ix)*

As a doctoral student at The Ohio State University, I had the privilege of being mentored by Dr. Bishop. Her commitment to equity issues in relation to children’s literature has significantly impacted my scholarship. I am titling this newsletter “Mirrors and Windows” because it will be my intention to provide children with opportunities to see images of themselves and others in the featured books. This will mean paying attention to books across various racial groups and international children’s literature. In addition, there will be a conscious attempt to include books across various genres such as poetry, fantasy, informational text, biography, historical fiction, and contemporary realistic fiction. This newsletter will be created with the assistance of numerous Clemson University undergraduates, most of whom are majoring in early childhood, elementary, or special education. Our intended audience includes parents, teachers, media specialists, booksellers, and interested others in the Upstate area of South Carolina and beyond.

#### Work Cited

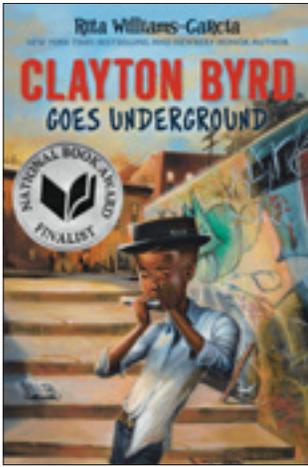
Bishop, R. S. (1990). Mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors. *Perspectives*, 6(3), ix–xi.

## ODYSSEY AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN AUDIOBOOK PRODUCTION

The Odyssey Award is given annually “to the producer of the best audiobook produced for children and/or young adults, available in English in the United States” (<http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/odysseyaward>). The award, sponsored by *Booklist* magazine, is jointly administered by the Association for Library Service to Children and the Young Adult Library Services Association, both of which are divisions within the American Library Association. The Odyssey Award Committee, composed of nine members, selects one winner and several honor titles. When selecting them, committee members consider a number of factors, such as the effective use of music and sound effects, voice quality, correct pronunciation of words, and whether the narrator(s) read in a manner that is dynamic and reflects the expressive nature of the text. The award is named in honor of Homer’s epic poem, which was “originally told and retold in the oral tradition.... The Odyssey Award allows us to return to the ancient roots of storytelling, while living in our modern world” (<http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/odysseyaward/odysseyabout>).

Here we feature two honor titles: *Creepy Carrots!* produced by Weston Woods Studios (written by Aaron Reynolds) and *Martina: The Beautiful Cockroach: A Cuban Folktale* produced by Peachtree Publishers (retold by Carmen Agra Deedy). Additional recommended winners and honor titles for children in grades K–6 are *Ghetto Cowboy* produced by Brilliance Audio (written by G. Neri), *The War That Saved My Life* produced by Listening Library (written by Kimberly Brubaker Bradley), *H.O.R.S.E.: A Game of Basketball and Imagination* produced by Live Oak Media (written by Christopher Myers), *We Are the Ship: The Story of Negro League Baseball* produced by Brilliance Audio (written by Kadir Nelson), and *Elijah of Buxton* produced by Listening Library (written by Christopher Paul Curtis). The winners of the 2018 Odyssey Award (audiobooks produced in 2017) will be announced on February 12 at the midwinter conference of the American Library Association in Denver, Colorado.

Please note that the reviews in this newsletter focus on the books, not the audiobooks, which are sold separately.



## CLAYTON BYRD GOES UNDERGROUND

Written by Rita Williams-Garcia.  
Illustrated by Frank Morrison.  
Amistad/HarperCollins, 2017.

\$16.99, Grades 4–6

“Look sharp. Be cool” (p. 7). These were the words that Clayton Byrd lived by from Cool Papa Byrd, his best friend. In this book Clayton, a young boy, is distressed when he loses his idol and grandfather, Cool Papa. All Clayton ever

dreamed of was to play a blues harp solo with Cool Papa and the Bluesmen, which now seemed impossible. Living by Cool Papa’s advice, Clayton decides to take matters into his own hands and join the Bluesmen, despite his mother forbidding him to do so. Clayton embarks on a mission but meets several obstacles, including the loss of his prized blues harp and a run-in with a crew of agitating teens. This compelling story is filled with complex emotions, distinct dialogue, and exciting cliff-hangers around every turn. Defying his mother’s wishes and taking a detour from school turns out to be a reckless decision, but one Clayton has to maneuver on his own. His suspenseful journey is sure to capture the attention of any reader who enters into the blues world of Clayton Byrd. —Sarah Warren



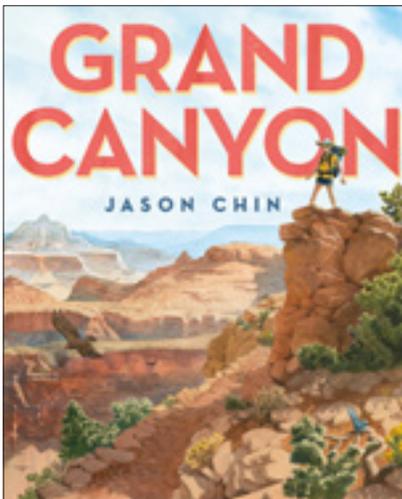
## MARTINA THE BEAUTIFUL COCKROACH: A CUBAN FOLKTALE

Retold by Carmen Agra Deedy. Illustrated by Michael Austin.  
Peachtree, 2007.

\$8.95, Grades K–6

THE ENGLISH–SPANISH WORD PAIRINGS BRING FUN CADENCE AND RHYTHM TO THE STORY AND MAY HAVE READERS WISHING FOR A WISE CUBAN GRANDMOTHER. THIS TALE GUARANTEES THAT YOU WILL NEVER THINK OF A COCKROACH IN QUITE THE SAME WAY AGAIN!

Have you ever received unexpected advice from a member of your family? Martina Josefina Catalina Cucaracha just turned 21 days old and is ready to find a husband. Before she begins the search, her *abuela* (grandmother) gives her “*un consejo increíble*, some shocking advice” (n.p.) to find the best suitor. Carmen Agra Deedy allows readers to follow Martina’s journey as she uses her grandmother’s advice to test the tempers of her possible husbands. The illustrations use dominance by making the characters larger to convey their specific emotions. The contrast in the rooster’s bright colors next to Martina’s lighter colors allows the reader to notice the change in his emotions. Page by page, you will find yourself eager to peek ahead to see who Martina chooses as an eligible suitor. This book is proof that love comes in all shapes and sizes. Deedy entertains her readers through her clever depictions of the animals in her story and by using witty language. For example, Martina remarks that the rooster is too “cocky” and that the lizard is too “cold-blooded” (n.p.) for her. The repetition used throughout ties the tale neatly together and keeps readers immersed in the text. The English–Spanish word pairings bring fun cadence and rhythm to the story and may have readers wishing for a wise Cuban grandmother. This tale guarantees that you will never think of a cockroach in quite the same way again! —Elise Denney & Madeleine Wyche



## GRAND CANYON

Written and illustrated by Jason Chin. Roaring Brook, 2017.

\$19.99, Grades 4–6

*Grand Canyon* introduces readers to the 277-mile-long, 18-mile-wide, and mile-deep natural wonder of the Southwest. Jason Chin allows readers to take a trip to this fantastic work of nature and learn about the characteristics

that make it so special. The story follows a father and daughter as they take a trip through the Grand Canyon together and explore its natural wonders. Each page of the book gives facts about different aspects of the canyon, such as its history, rock formations, and layers, as well as plants and animals. Readers are given information about how canyons are naturally formed, and see illustrations showing what the land looked like before it was carved into the massive canyon we now know it to be. Using intricate illustrations and informational borders, Chin fills each page with information about the Grand Canyon. The illustrations are detailed and labeled to help extend the information presented in the book. Many pages introduce readers to different plant and animal species by using more than 15 illustrations of species native to the canyon. Chin also uses foldout pages to portray to readers how large the Grand Canyon actually is. Just like the girl in the book, many children will be astonished to visit the Grand Canyon through Chin’s magnificent work. —Sarah Lynch



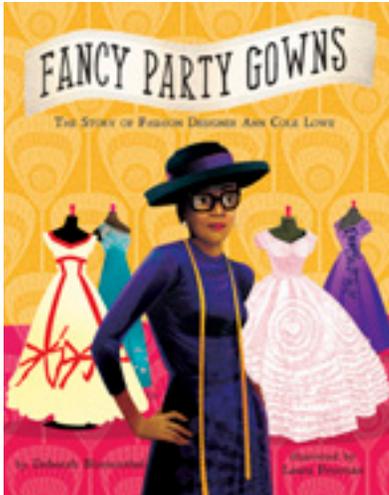
## CREEPY CARROTS!

*Written by Aaron Reynolds.  
Illustrated by Peter Brown.  
Simon & Schuster, 2012.*

*\$17.99, Grades K–3*

“Jasper Rabbit had a passion for carrots. And the carrots that grew in Crackenhopper Field were the best. Fat. Crisp. And free for the taking” (n.p.). Jasper cannot stop eating carrots

from the garden near his house. He goes to the garden multiple times a day to pick and eat carrots, until one day he believes that they might be following him. Throughout the story, every page is full of black-and-white illustrations, with the exception of the bright orange carrots. By including the carrots on each page, readers can recognize how important they are to the main idea of the story. Without spoiling the end of the book, Jasper learns the hard way about moderation, and the carrots celebrate the success of their “creepy plan” (n.p.). Children will enjoy this story about Jasper Rabbit and may want to read Reynolds and Brown’s most recent title, *Creepy Pair of Underwear!* —Hallie Hardin



## FANCY PARTY GOWNS: THE STORY OF FASHION DESIGNER ANN COLE LOWE

*Written by Deborah Blumenthal. Illustrated by Laura Freeman.  
Little Bee, 2017.*

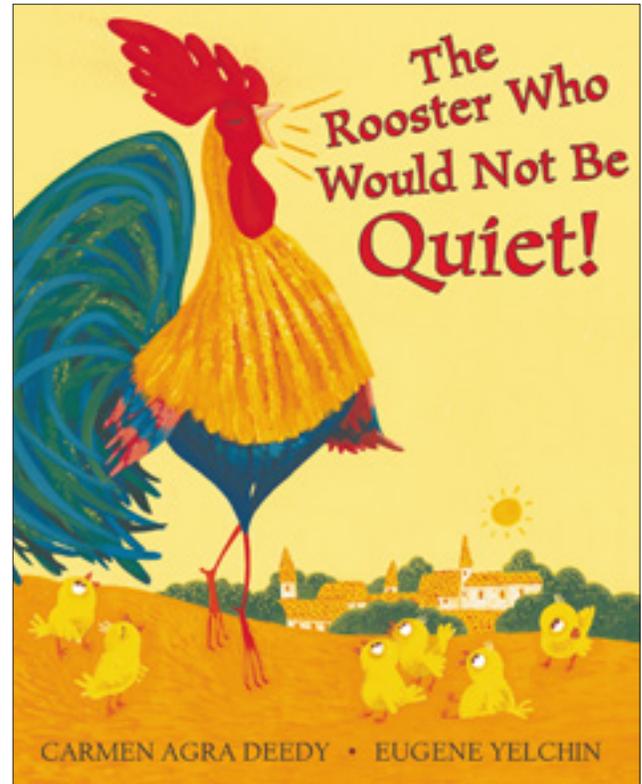
*\$17.99, Grades 4–6*

In today’s society, personal and social adversity are still prevalent and can get in the way of individuals pursuing their passions. When Ann grew older, she experienced these struggles, along with others, but refused to let them get in the way of pursuing her passion to make beautiful, elegant party gowns.

WHEN SHE WAS OLD ENOUGH TO THREAD A NEEDLE, ANN COLE LOWE’S MOMMA AND GRANDMOTHER TAUGHT HER HOW TO SEW....ANN’S FAMILY CAME FROM ALABAMA. HER GREAT-GRANDMA HAD BEEN A SLAVE, SO HER FAMILY KNEW ABOUT WORKING HARD JUST TO GET BY. (N.P.)

She made it clear that it is important to do what you love. “When Ann saw obstacles, she thought about what she could do, not what she couldn’t change”

(n.p.). Unrecognized, she became the designer for many famous women, such as Olivia de Havilland and Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy. Ann created Kennedy’s iconic wedding dress and all of the dresses for the wedding party. Ann made clothes, she said, “to prove that a Negro can become a major dress designer” (n.p.). Together, Deborah Blumenthal and Laura Freeman portray the life of Ann Cole Lowe with grace and class. With each turn of the page, the pictures show the progression of Ann accomplishing her dream and some of the obstacles that she met along the way. The radiant colors and details show just how talented she really was at what she did and the countless hours that she put into making beautiful, elegant party gowns. —Madison Gardner & Amber Johnson



## THE ROOSTER WHO WOULD NOT BE QUIET!

*Written by Carmen Agra Deedy. Illustrated by Eugene Yelchin.  
Scholastic, 2017.*

*\$17.99, Grades K–6*

“Kee-kee-ree-KEE!” (n.p.) is the solemn battle cry of a spirited rooster trying to reintroduce song to the small village of La Paz. In a search for some serenity, the once joyful and boisterous residents of La Paz elect a new mayor, Don Pepe, but he has more than peace and quiet on his agenda. In fact, he outlaws song altogether! This is the story of a brazen rooster who goes head-to-head with Don Pepe in an effort to restore the original noisy and happy nature of La Paz. Despite Don Pepe’s best attempts, this rooster shows the importance of always staying true to your inner song. The mixed-media paintings of Eugene Yelchin help reinforce the hopeful tone created by our feathered hero. Yelchin’s use of pale hues reflect the quiet, depressing mood of a world without song, and he contrasts deep yellows and reds to warmly portray the once-again animated village of La Paz. Because of its rich storyline and unlikely protagonist, this story would be a great read for elementary students of all ages.

—Caitlin Mulholland

**CARMEN AGRA DEEDY** is a storyteller and author of children's books. Some of her titles are *Martina the Beautiful Cockroach: A Cuban Folktale*, *The Library Dragon*, *14 Cows for America*, *The Yellow Star: The Legend of King Christian X of Denmark*, and *The Cheshire Cheese Cat: A Dickens of a Tale*. Her most recent book is *The Rooster Who Would Not Be Quiet!* Deedy has received a number of accolades, such as a Pura Belpré Award Honor for *Martina the Beautiful Cockroach*, an E.B. White Read-Aloud Honor for *14 Cows for America*, a Charlotte Huck Award for Outstanding Fiction Honor for *The Rooster Who Would Not Be Quiet!*, and a Jane Addams Peace Prize Honor for *The Yellow Star*. In addition, *The Cheshire Cheese Cat* was selected as an ALA (American Library Association) Notable Book.

Deedy was born in Havana, Cuba, and moved to the United States as a refugee in 1964 after Castro's Revolution. She grew up in Decatur, Georgia, where she still lives. Her childhood and family provide inspiration and rich resources for her stories. Some of her favorite children's books are *Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs* by Judi Barrett, *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak, *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!* by Mo Willems, *Make Way for Ducklings* by Robert McCloskey, and *Miss Nelson Is Missing!* by Harry Allard. One of Deedy's biggest challenges is making the time to write, so she writes wherever she can, from doctors' offices to airport lobbies. A few of her hobbies are knitting, embroidery, and French hand sewing. For more information about Deedy, visit her website: <https://carmenagradeedy.com/>.



“MY LOVE OF STORIES BEGAN WHEN I WAS A LITTLE GIRL; I TAKE NO CREDIT FOR IT. I GREW UP SURROUNDED BY STORYTELLERS, BOTH IN MY OWN REFUGEE CUBAN COMMUNITY AS WELL AS THE COLORFUL SOUTHERN TOWN THAT WAS MY HOME FROM THE TIME I WAS THREE. I FIRMLY BELIEVE THAT GOOD NARRATIVE IS BEST LEARNED WHEN YOU ARE EXPOSED TO WONDERFUL STORIES AND MARVELOUS STORYTELLERS FROM A YOUNG AGE. IN OTHER WORDS, THE BEST STORYTELLERS AND STORY WRITERS BEGIN THEIR CAREERS (OFTEN UNBEKNOWNST TO THEMSELVES) AS STORY LISTENERS AND STORY READERS.”

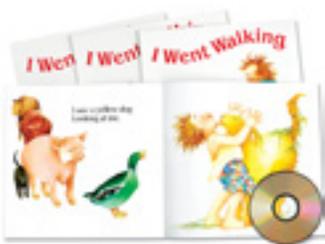
[HTTP://WWW.KIDLIT411.COM/2014/12/KIDLIT411-AUTHOR-SPOTLIGHT-CARMEN-AGRA-DEEDY.HTML](http://www.kidlit411.com/2014/12/kidlit411-author-spotlight-carmen-agra-deedy.html)



### CIRCLE TIME ACTIVITY PUPPETS

Coming together at the beginning of the day for circle time is a tradition in many early childhood classrooms, and these puppets can help increase children's engagement. This set includes three puppets that focus on several common topics typically talked about during circle time: weather, birthdays, and the days of the week. The puppets come with Velcro that allow for the manipulation and sticking on of pieces, and a pouch that can hold children's photographs if it is their birthday. The tallest puppet is 15" tall, and all are machine washable. The set costs \$45, and the individual puppets are \$15.99 each, plus shipping and handling.

**CIRCLE TIME ACTIVITY PUPPETS    ITEM TT195**



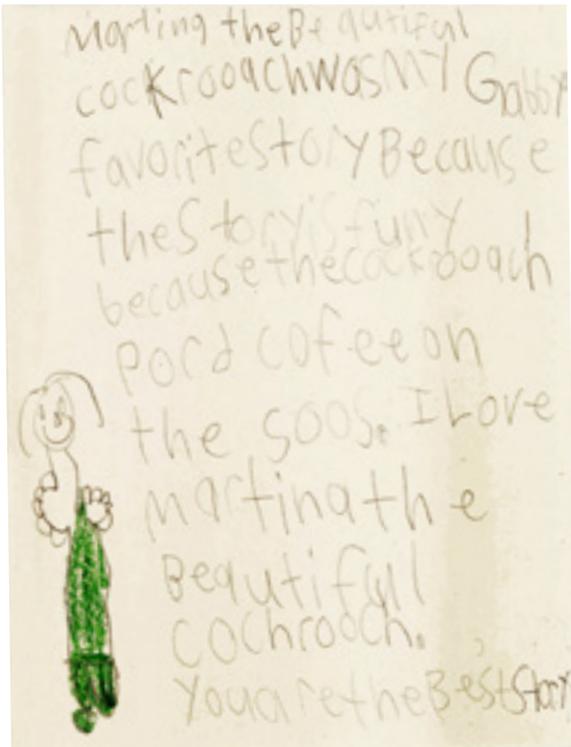
### CLASSROOM CLASSICS READ-ALONGS

The Classroom Classics Read-Alongs series features a number of popular children's books. The two titles featured here are *I Went Walking*, a classic predictable book written by Sue Williams, and *The Snowy Day* by Ezra Jack Keats, the first picturebook with a main character of color to win a Caldecott Medal. Each kit features four paperback copies and a CD that allows children to follow along. A sampling of other titles available, besides these two books, are *When Sophie Gets Angry—Really, Really Angry...* by Molly Bang, *Planting a Rainbow* by Lois Ehlert, *It Looked Like Spilt Milk* by Charles G. Shaw, *Caps for Sale* by Esphyr Slobodkina, and *The Little Mouse, the Red Ripe Strawberry, and the Big Hungry Bear* by Don Wood and Audrey Wood. Each kit costs \$40.50 plus shipping and handling.

**I WENT WALKING READ-ALONG KIT    ITEM RE676**  
**THE SNOWY DAY READ-ALONG KIT    ITEM RE677**

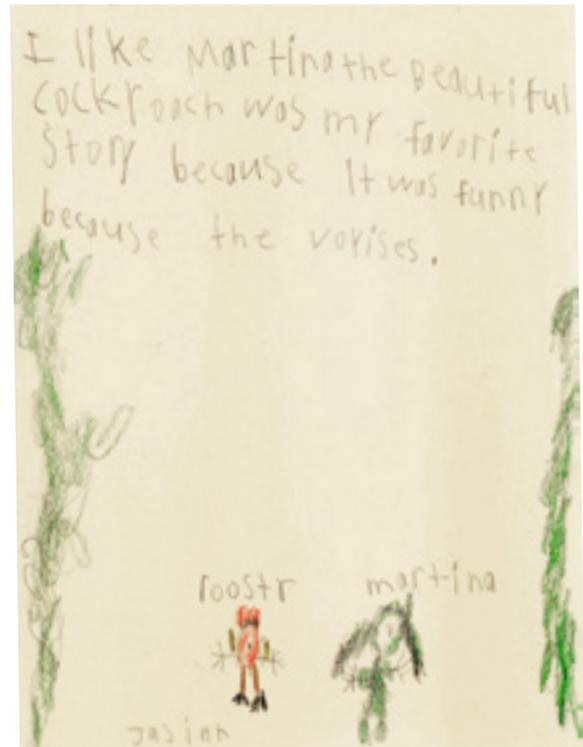
For more information about these or other products or to place an order, visit the Lakeshore Learning Materials website at <https://www.lakeshorelearning.com/> or call (800) 428-4414.

**CHILDREN'S RESPONSES**  
**MARTINA THE BEAUTIFUL COCKROACH: A CUBAN FOLKTALE**  
**RETOLD BY CARMEN AGRA DEEDY**



Gabriella "Gabby" H., 7  
Anderson, SC

Gabby enjoys dancing, swimming, singing, and giving hugs.



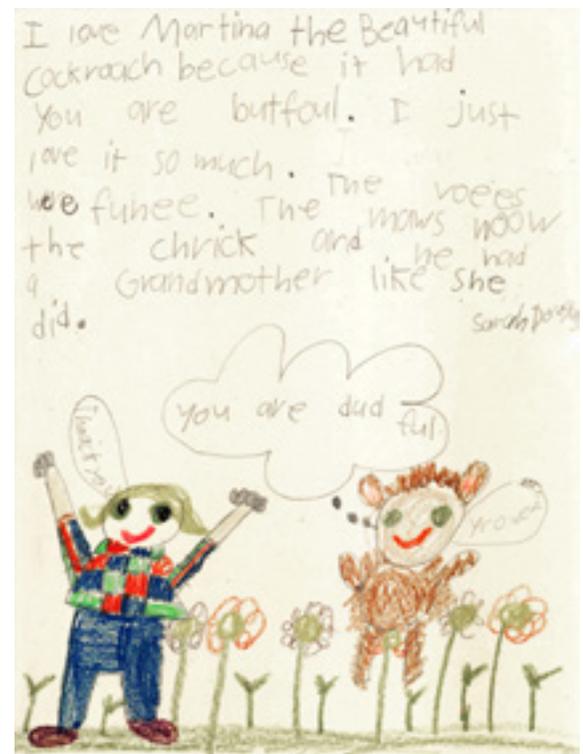
Jasiah B., 6  
Anderson, SC

Jasiah enjoys practicing his martial arts skills, running, and reading.



Blakely M., 7  
Anderson, SC

Blakely enjoys tennis, gymnastics, dance, camping, and swimming.



Sarah-Douglas M., 6  
Anderson, SC

Sarah-Douglas enjoys drawing, swimming, playing school, tennis, and playing with her cats.

# Mirrors -and- Windows...

FALL 2017

*Featured inside...*

Odyssey Award  
for Excellence in  
Audiobook Production

Profile of children's book  
author Carmen Agra Deedy

## CHILDREN'S ART-SUBMISSIONS

We are proud to feature the pictures and writing that four children created in response to the book *Martina the Beautiful Cockroach: A Cuban Folktale*. We feature children's work in all of our newsletters. If your child draws a picture or writes something in response to one of the books featured in this newsletter and mails it to my address, I will provide her or him with a complimentary copy of a children's book. Please mail pictures or writing samples—along with your contact information—to the following address:

**Dr. Jonda C. McNair**  
**Clemson University**  
**College of Education**  
**418 Tillman Hall**  
**Clemson, SC 29634-0723**

*Please feel free to contact  
Dr. McNair by phone  
at (864) 656-1577  
or e-mail [jmcnair@clermson.edu](mailto:jmcnair@clermson.edu)  
if you have any questions.*

## CREDIT

The *Mirrors and Windows...* newsletter is published once each semester by Dr. Jonda C. McNair along with Clemson University students as a part of the Creative Inquiry Program. The Creative Inquiry Program at Clemson University allows faculty and students to collaborate on visual and performing arts, research, and service learning projects. The newsletter logo was created by Duncan Tonatiuh and used with his permission.

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A special thank you to Drs. Rudine Sims Bishop, Violet J. Harris, and Linda Leonard Lamme. My passion for and knowledge about children's literature is because of the three of you. Thanks for passing it on.

*Coming Spring 2018*  
Language Diversity and  
Children's Literature  
Profile of children's book  
author/illustrator  
Angela Dominguez

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