

# The corners

*Newsletter of the Teaching Resources Collection at Bishop Grosseteste University Library (BGU)*

**Welcome** to the third issue of *The Four Corners*, a free children's literature newsletter published by the Library at BGU to promote its children's literature collection in the Teaching Resources Collection (TRC). It is published bi-annually and edited by Rose Roberto, Teaching Resources Librarian and historian, and Amy Webster, Senior Lecturer in Education Studies. In addition to our regular features listed below, this issue's special theme is representation and diversity in children's literature, which links to BGU's campus-wide celebration of Black History Month (BHM).

Members of academic departments and core services across the university have been planning a series of events that will take place across campus throughout October. This includes book displays throughout the Library, and a story-telling programme featuring our collection of diverse children's literature. Drawing on BGU's long history as a teacher training college for inspiration, the themed campus events highlight the local and international work of black educators, as well as acknowledging the knowledge produced by and shared among people from the African diaspora communities with the world.

Display of Black educators featuring Beryl Gilroy in Main Foyer of BGU Library.  
Photo by Rose Roberto.



The main theme of the book display at the library entrance is 'British Educators Featuring Beryl Gilroy, Author of *Black Teacher*' which runs from 1 October - 24 October. Beryl Gilroy (1924-2001) was a Guiana-born teacher, novelist, ethno-psychotherapist, and poet. Gilroy moved to Britain in the 1950s, and has been described as 'one of Britain's most significant post-war Caribbean migrants' of the Windrush generation. Gilroy became the first black headteacher in London, overcoming much discrimination and establishing innovative multicultural primary school environments to support London's changing demographics. Later she became a writer and scholar. BGU Library has a wide range of her Caribbean-centred fiction and anthologies.

Two other displays which can be viewed on the Library's first floor display are 'Atlantic World Contributions to British Medicine and Nursing' which runs from 1 - 17 October, and 'Celebrating

## Contents of this Issue

### Diversity in BGU's Collections

- SUSAN RODDA, 2-3

### Bringing Collections to Life

- ROSE ROBERTO, 4

### Journeys thru books/libraries

- KAREN JEAN HUNT, 5-6

### Getting Published

- PAUL MORTON, 6-7

### 'These titles moved us' feature articles by:

- AMANDA ARBOUIN, 8 - MARY-LOUISE MAYNES, 11  
- SELINA PORTERA, 9 - SIBYLLE ERLE, 12-13  
- VALERIE WADE, 10 - KATE LAWRENCE, 13  
- AMY WEBSTER, 11 - ENYA MENICHIN, 13

### Around the BGU Campus

BLACK HISTORY MONTH EVENTS, 14  
READING FOR PLEASURE, 14  
BGU'S MA IN CHILDREN'S,  
LITERATURE + LITERACIES, 15  
READING GROUPS, 15-16

Black Women's contributions to Arts and Culture' which will run from 17 - 28 October. The TRC will display 'Children's and YA Poetry, Fiction and Picture books by Awarding-Winning Black Authors' from Monday 4 - 17 October and 'Children's Books featuring Girls in the Sciences' from Friday 17 - 28 October.

Drawing from the expertise of a new special interest group focused on inclusive teaching on campus, TILIIS, several members of staff involved in BGU's Education courses have also been heavily involved with BHM on a national level in the UK. Not only have they contributed articles in this year's *BHM magazine*, they were also instrumental in developing the BHM Resource Pack 'Proud to Be'. Since 2017, the BHM pack has been used in lesson planning for Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4/5 teachers across the UK. The University is extremely proud to support this year's events, which profile its staff expertise and showcase a variety of coordinated events meant to inspire and draw together the BGU community.

## Reflecting on Diversity and BGU's Historical Collections

 BY SUSAN RODDA, BGU COLLECTIONS LIBRARIAN

Racial justice isn't something we think about only at this time of the year. Over the decades the BGU Library has accrued a collection of books relating to racial inequality, racial strife, and colonial history—much of it linked to contemporary issues of the day, and spanning several continents. These titles reflect specific collective social and cultural experiences, and narratives of how certain events affected the people who lived through them. Viewing specific issues now, with the hindsight of twenty-first century knowledge, we may have a different perspective of these events. However, it is instructive to situate these issues historically, and in that regard, BGU Library provides fundamental resources that aid in understanding.



First Floor Library Display, 'Atlantic World Contributions to British Medicine and Nursing,' 1-17 October, 2021. Photo by Rose Roberto.

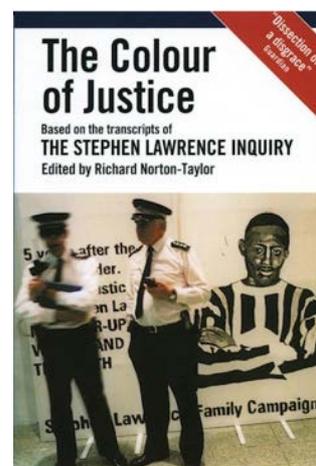
For example, we have Martin Luther King's *Why We Can't Wait*, written in 1964, in which he reviews the background to the 1963 Civil Rights movement in America, and outlines future courses of action. What was a call to arms in 1964 is now a glimpse of a moment in time. We have Theodore G. Vincent's *Black Power and the Garvey Movement* (1971), which examines the Black Power movement written when the movement was at its height. We have important works from Africa such as Jomo Kenyatta's autobiography written in 1972. *Kenyatta*, co-written with J. Murray-Brown, outlines Kenyatta's view of his life as a Kenyan anti-colonial activist, the first indigenous leader and first President of Kenya (1964–1978). He was an instrumental figure in transforming Kenya from a British colony into an independent republic.

We have two examples of books published closer to home. *To ride the storm: the 1980 Bristol 'riot' and the state* was written in 1983. The book clearly traces the roots of violence erupting in the St Paul's area of Bristol, as a result of increased racial

tension, poor housing, and the alienation of black youth. Racism and violence were so prevalent here in late 1970's and 1980's that Penguin published a "Penguin Special" in 1988 entitled, *Under Siege: Racism and Violence in Britain Today*, written by Keith Thompson.

Stephen Lawrence was a black British teenager murdered in 1993, while waiting for a bus, in a racially motivated attack. In a drama by R. Norton-Taylor and Tricycle Theatre, *The Colour of Justice: Based on the Transcripts of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry* (2004), we can see not only the legal failings in the prosecution of this case, but that as a society we still have a great deal to improve on.

Examples of more recent publications in our holdings explore the trauma inflicted on the indigenous peoples of Canada by the imposition of Residential Schools in *A Knock on the Door: The Essential History of Residential Schools* by P. Fontaine and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. There is also *Residential Schools: With the Words and Images of Survivors* by L. Loyie, W. K. Spear and C. Brissenden. Children's titles on the same issue can be found in the Teaching Resources Centre.



We have other, more opaque, colonial curiosities. For example, a book of sermons written by a clergyman for his congregation in India, which he warns 'may need some amendment if used at home.' There are also daring tales of adventure and exploration; memoirs of brave, no doubt well-meaning, missionaries, all told with quite a different world view from our own. These collections are useful, too, because they allow us to see the harm of the past; what we understand today as colonisation, exploitation, and a complete lack of regard for the ways and beliefs of indigenous peoples. These writings illuminate a certain mind set that we *can* and *should* interrogate today, with simple questions such as, what did they see and what were they thinking?

During Black History Month I would like to take the opportunity make readers aware of the richness of the BGU Library collections which support research and teaching on topics related to equality and diversity, and our short, carefully curated reading lists, which are refreshed and updated regularly. Simply type 'Equality and Diversity' at this URL: <https://bishopg.rl.talis.com> and You'll find book lists on these topics: Racial Justice; Decolonial history and theory, Immigration, Refugees, and the UK; Poverty and Social Justice; Women in Society; LGBTQ+; Mental Health; Differently Abled.

**The BGU Library has these editions mentioned in this article in order of appearance:**

- King, M.L. *Why we can't wait*. London : Harper & Row, 1964.
- Vincent, T.G. *Black power and the Garvey movement*. Berkeley, CA: Ramparts Press, 1971.
- Murray-Brown, J. and Kenyatta, J. *Kenyatta*. London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1972.
- Harris, J. *To ride the storm : the 1980 Bristol 'Riot' and the state*. London: Heineman, 1983.
- Thompson, K. *Under siege : racism and violence in Britain today*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988.
- Norton-Taylor, R. and Tricycle Theatre. *The colour of justice : based on the transcripts of the Stephen Lawrence inquiry*. London: Oberon Books, 2004.
- Fontaine, P. and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. *A knock on the door: the essential history of residential schools* Winnipeg, Manitoba : University of Manitoba Press, 2016.
- Loyie, L., Spear, W.K. and Brissenden, C. *Residential schools: with the words and images of survivors*. Brantford, ON: Indigenous Education Press, 2014.

## New Ways of Bringing British Heritage Collections to Life

BY ROSE ROBERTO, TEACHING RESOURCES LIBRARIAN



I live in Sheffield. The material above was discovered in the Sheffield City Archives and turned into tweets that were posted online by writer Désirée Reynolds, who has been working as Writer in Residence at the Sheffield Archives this past year. Screenshots of the tweets, which Reynolds gave me permission to re-publish, show two children from Sheffield's past captured in creative media. The film still on the left shows an un-named black girl, while the water colour painting on the right shows a little white girl, name Ada Hicks, sitting with her *ayah*, or nanny. Reynolds' tweets ask who these unnamed people of colour are, and speculates what types of lives they may have led in Edwardian and Victorian times. These two examples, specifically offering glimpses into Sheffield's past, are part of the wider 'Take It To The Streets Project' which aims to bring black and marginalised voices out of the Archive, to provide some form of reparative justice, and to reveal to the public a Sheffield past that has not been looked at on this scale before.

What is a Writer in Residence, and what do Writers in Residence do? According to the Arts Council of England, which helps to fund and to provide guidance for libraries and archives that want to host Writers (or Artists In Residence), a residency is a period of time a creative person spends working with a particular organisation. Residencies can last weeks, months or even a year. Most residencies are beneficial to both writers and the host organisation because a Writer in Residence has the potential to devote time and energy into forging new links with the community, develop programmes or events for library audiences to try something new, and they can also foster creativity and/or cultural engagement through community events. Their presence and activities help to challenge preconceptions about libraries or archives being static places. Additionally, since Writers are not permanent members of staff, they are not confined by staff policies or routine work-related tasks. Additionally, Writers often create new work inspired by or closely linked to the local area; at the same time their creative work promotes the local area across wider social and artistic networks. Or, in the case of Reynold's tweets, let her followers know about specific items in the Sheffield Archives that are interesting and worth reflecting on.

According to journalist Lisa Wong of the *The Sheffield Star*, Reynolds gave important testimony relevant to a local government enquiry. When Sheffield City Council created an independent commission to look at what could be done to address racial disparities in Sheffield city and 'transform' it both in the short term and long term, Reynolds was one of the people offering expertise, thoughts and voices to the Sheffield Equality Commission. Originally from London, Reynolds testified about quality of life in the 'Steel City', saying in the past she has questioned her desire to stay in Sheffield, the city she has lived in for many years because systemic racism doesn't allow the best atmosphere for artists to thrive in. She also believed that toxic racial atmosphere drove many black artists out of Sheffield. The 'Take It To The Streets Project' is a step in the right direction. It is also meaningful that in the case of the tweets above, it is the Writer that has discovered children, when the usual expectation has been for children to discover their favourite writers.

Désirée Reynolds will be speaking on Thursday 21 October 2021, 12:30pm - 1:30pm, with archivist Cheryl Bailey, at the Millennium Gallery, as part of Sheffield's Off the Shelf Writing festival, running from 15 - 31 October 2021.

Note: American (US) spelling and punctuation retained to preserve the style of the author's unique voice.

## My Journeys Through Books and Libraries

BY KAREN JEAN HUNT, RETIRED ACADEMIC LIBRARIAN AND FORMER ARCHIVIST

Growing up, the Detroit Public Library was my safe space. From a very young age, I would travel downtown, by city bus, and spend my days immersed in books. The themes of my favorites were always the same. *My Side of the Mountain* is an adventure-survival story about 12-year-old Sam, who escapes New York City to live in the Catskill Mountains. *The Outsiders* is about a teenager named 'Ponyboy' who survives poverty in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Both stories, written by female authors, resonated with me. And as I sat there reading, I intuitively knew that libraries had knowledge, and that knowledge would get me out of Detroit.

My route from the Detroit Public Library into library school was a long one. I was 17 when I saw an ad in TV Guide offering free medical and dental benefits, plus a monthly salary of \$280, all in exchange for enlisting in the military—an important consideration when you're poor and without medical insurance. In 1974, the US government was looking to recruit females, so after high school, I joined the Air Force. I loved basic training. After attending technical training school, I was assigned to Norton Air Force Base in San Bernardino, California, where I worked with the cutting-edge information technology at the time: the Key punch. The Key punch was an electromechanical device which stored information. As a key punch operator, I spent my days in aircraft warehouses, punching holes into card stock. After my discharge from military service, I was entitled to G.I. Bill benefits. For me, that meant financial assistance for college. I completed a bachelor's degree in English from California State University Long Beach, where I also worked part-time in the Veterans Affairs Office. After receiving this degree, I enrolled into graduate school, in Ohio. By the following summer, I felt restless and wanted to do something more substantial. So, after watching the 1985 Live Aid famine relief concert, I joined the Peace Corps.

The Peace Corps is an independent US agency created in 1961 to "promote world peace and friendship" through three goals: (1) to help the peoples of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women; (2) to help promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served; and (3) to help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans." Volunteers undergo three months of training, prior to arriving at their permanent work sites, usually in schools, non-profits, or non-governmental agencies. In 1986 I was sent to Kenya, where I taught high school English and successfully wrote grants to start a school library and build two 40,000-liter rain catch water tanks.

In 1988 I returned home and completed two masters' degrees. At Wright State University, I was the first African American to complete their graduate course in Public History. Next, I completed a degree in Information and Library Studies, from the University of Michigan. I used both of these to begin a long career as an academic librarian and archivist, and have worked at universities in California and the East Coast. In 2017, I retired from the Duke University Libraries, in North Carolina.

Three weeks later, I arrived in Armenia ready to begin my second term of service with the Peace Corps. After training, I was assigned to teach high school English. My secondary project was working with two



Karen Jean Hunt, age 17, newly enlisted in the US Air Force. Courtesy of Karen Jean Hunt.



Karen Jean Hunt in 2021, with school library books behind her.

volunteers, from the UK, to teach English informally through summer clubs, at the local Armenian Red Cross Society soup kitchen. One month after completing my service in Armenia, I arrived in Addis Ababa, to begin serving as a Peace Corps volunteer in Ethiopia. After training, I was assigned to teach ninth grade English, in the Amhara Region. During my short time on-site, I acquired three collections of English book donations for the school library. I also made plans to begin a school gardening project and run a club for girls. Unfortunately the COVID-19 pandemic hit. In March 2020, the Peace Corps was forced to shut down and evacuate all 7,000 volunteers worldwide.

At this moment, it seems that my life has come full circle. As a child, I used libraries as a way to better my situation in Detroit. Now that I'm retired, libraries are still a big part of my life. When I returned to the US after being evacuated from Ethiopia, I joined AmeriCorps. The voluntary organization is often seen as the domestic Peace Corps. My AmeriCorps service site is in Alaska, working at the Home School Office, for a local school district. The homeschool has a lending library. Last year, when parents and children weren't allowed into our building, due to COVID-19 restrictions, it was my job to catalogue the lending library items, using the LibraryThings app. By doing so, our home school families could select the materials they needed online. I would then pull the items, check them out, and delivered them to families waiting outside, in their cars. So, all these years later, I am still connected to books, libraries, and education—my safe places. I would like to believe that when we find our safe places, we share those stories. Children need to know that these places are out there. Safe travels!

Karen Jean Hunt regularly posts blogs on 'Ghetto Girl Travels' <https://ghettogirltravels.wordpress.com>

## Getting Published: My Debut Early Reader Children's Book

BY PAUL MORTON, AUTHOR - ILLUSTRATOR

How does a children's book idea become published? This is a topic always of interest to budding authors and established writers alike, as well as students of children's literature. This article describes my experience.

I've had some success with other books but my debut early reader children's book, *Bug Belly Babysitting Trouble*, was published April 2020. Unfortunate timing, as it happened to be the first week of pandemic lockdown! It's no mean feat to write and produce 96 fully-illustrated pages, and I'm very proud of the achievement. But bear with me as I slip back in time and explain how this froggy story came about. In the front of the book there is an acknowledgment to "Koray, the original inspiration for Bug Belly". I can reveal that this pivotal moment occurred some 15 years earlier when my 18-month old nephew Koray and I needed a new game one hot summer's day.

Bug Belly was originally a toy frog with its mouth squeaker missing, thus allowing items to be stuffed inside its ample tum. Bug Belly was named and the 'bug hunt' was invented! As we romped around the room gobbling up bugs and other scrummy looking insects (drawn on scraps of paper), that lightbulb moment happened. Bug Belly the children's book character was born. He would forever be a slave to his hungry tum and it would often lead him into trouble.

Over subsequent years I experimented with a counting book for *Bug Belly*, a count down book, and a couple of picture books, all fully-developed as dummy books which were submitted to various publishers. And

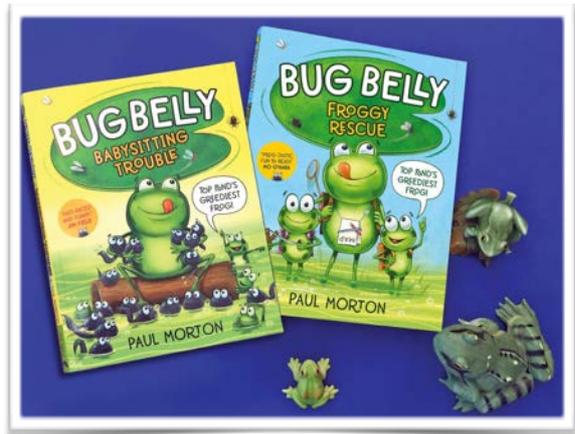


Photo courtesy of Paul Morton.

despite some very encouraging feedback, all received polite rejections. With the influx of other projects, I shelved Bug Belly and didn't re-visit him until some eight years later. The break had certainly done me a world of good. Whilst sketching in a café one lunchtime, suddenly out of the blue, I pictured a fantastically funny double-page spread where Bug Belly was feeling decidedly queasy after over indulging on a slug 'n slime smoothie. That picture was the catalyst. My imagination let rip, I had found 'my voice' for Bug Belly, and I promptly filled around 16 double pages with fresh ideas including a brand-new storyline.

I presented this updated Bug Belly picture book idea live on stage at the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI) entertaining version of The Voice, during their conference in Winchester, 2018. The enormity of pitching the book to a panel of five agents in front of a live audience of fellow writers and illustrators was certainly nerve wracking. Yet, it also demonstrated how confident I now felt about this refreshed and better realised lead character. Bug Belly was now not only the greediest frog in Top Pond, but along with his kit bag full of cool gadgets he was also the most ingenious frog around and able to tackle whatever problem I dreamt up for him.

Luckily for me, Natascha Biebow, the Editorial Director of Five Quills publishing, was in SCBWI audience that day. She heard my pitch and saw the potential in the character and the scope for fun adventures. She approached me with a suggestion: could I unpack my rather busy picture book story into a young fiction chapter book for 5–8 year olds? Turn 32 illustrated pages into 96? Expand 450 words to 3000? Gulp!!

However, the more I thought about it, the more I realised that Bug Belly had much more to say and offer than the original picture book format would allow. So I accepted the challenge, and wrote *Bug Belly: Babysitting Trouble*.

As a 'pre-published' author/illustrator, I had heard experienced, published children's book friends say that the hard work really starts *after* publication. I used to think it was a kind of glib 'in-joke', but boy is it true! With dwindling marketing budgets and a burgeoning book market, publishers, especially with new authors, tend to push their resources towards the book launch, and after that a huge portion of the publicity and marketing is down to the author.



Photo courtesy of Paul Morton.

Before lockdown, I had managed one single school visit, and since then all my visits and promotion has been online. I've subsequently learnt how to use iMovie and have produced lots of video readings from my books and created tons of well received craft tutorials. "How to draw frogs", "How to draw the baddies", "How to make a frog wobbler" etc. Fortunately Bug Belly crafts and activities lend themselves nicely to home and school resources, and over 15 months or so, I've produced lots of video readings and hundreds of worksheets, all available via [www.bugbelly.com](http://www.bugbelly.com).

*Bug Belly* now firmly exists in the children's book world and hopefully he's here to stay. Book two in the series: *Bug Belly Froggy Rescue*, was published July 2021. I think I enjoyed creating the second book even more than the first, maybe because I knew more of what to expect from the characters. I have plans for *Bug Belly* 3 and 4 and I'm hoping to return to the picture book format at some stage soon too.

*Bug Belly: Babysitting Trouble* (London: Five Quills, 2020) is available from the BGU Library.

## *Anansi the Spider and Tiger's Stew* by Peter Kalu (2006)

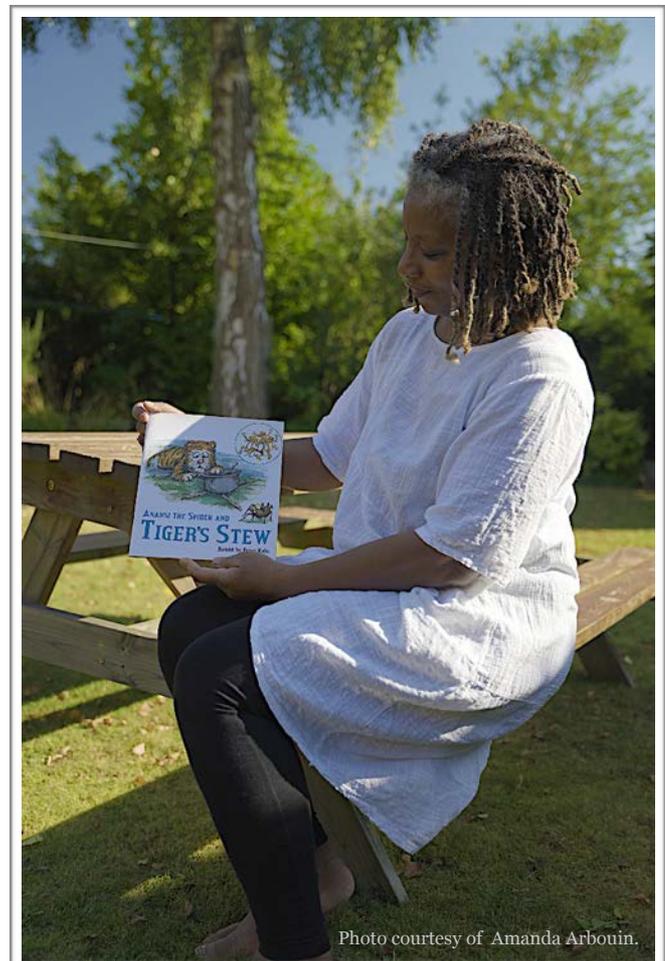
BY AMANDA ARBOUIN, BGU HONORARY SENIOR FELLOW IN EDUCATION

*Anansi the Spider and Tiger's Stew*\* is an entertaining children's story about the mischievous character, Anansi the spider. Anansi is a rogue, who uses his quick wit and intelligence to play all sorts of tricks on his animal friends. The stories are set in a tropical backdrop and use humour to convey the message that, sometimes, unscrupulous characters masquerade as friends.

As a British child of African Caribbean parents, I first encountered Anansi through stories told in the oral history tradition of my Jamaican family. It was only as an adult that I discovered that tales of Anansi did not originate in the Caribbean, but in West Africa. They had travelled from Africa to the Caribbean during the Transatlantic Slave Trade, and then from the Caribbean to the UK during the Windrush migration. For more than five hundred years, families of African descent have passed down Anansi stories, teaching generations of children about the human characteristic of deception and the potential power of cleverness.

This rich history of storytelling was brought back to life for me in 2006, when my son, at age three, received this book as a gift from a family friend. I was delighted to see Anansi's character come to life in print and to share his naughty exploits with my enchanted son. In the first reading of this bedtime story, we enjoyed the build-up, wondering just how the trickster Anansi would outwit Tiger to get his delicious stew ... and then escape Tiger's wrath! Subsequent re-readings gave us equal amounts of pleasure and filled our evenings with joy and laughter.

Praise to Peter Kalu for his amusing retelling of an ancient story and to Akhter Shah for the colourful illustrations. This book holds a place in our hearts and even survived my son's bedroom clear-out, when as a teenager he announced he no longer had time for childhood things. May the next generation of children derive as much happiness from it as we did.



\* Kalu, Peter, *Anansi the spider and Tiger's stew*. Manchester: Satchel, 2006.

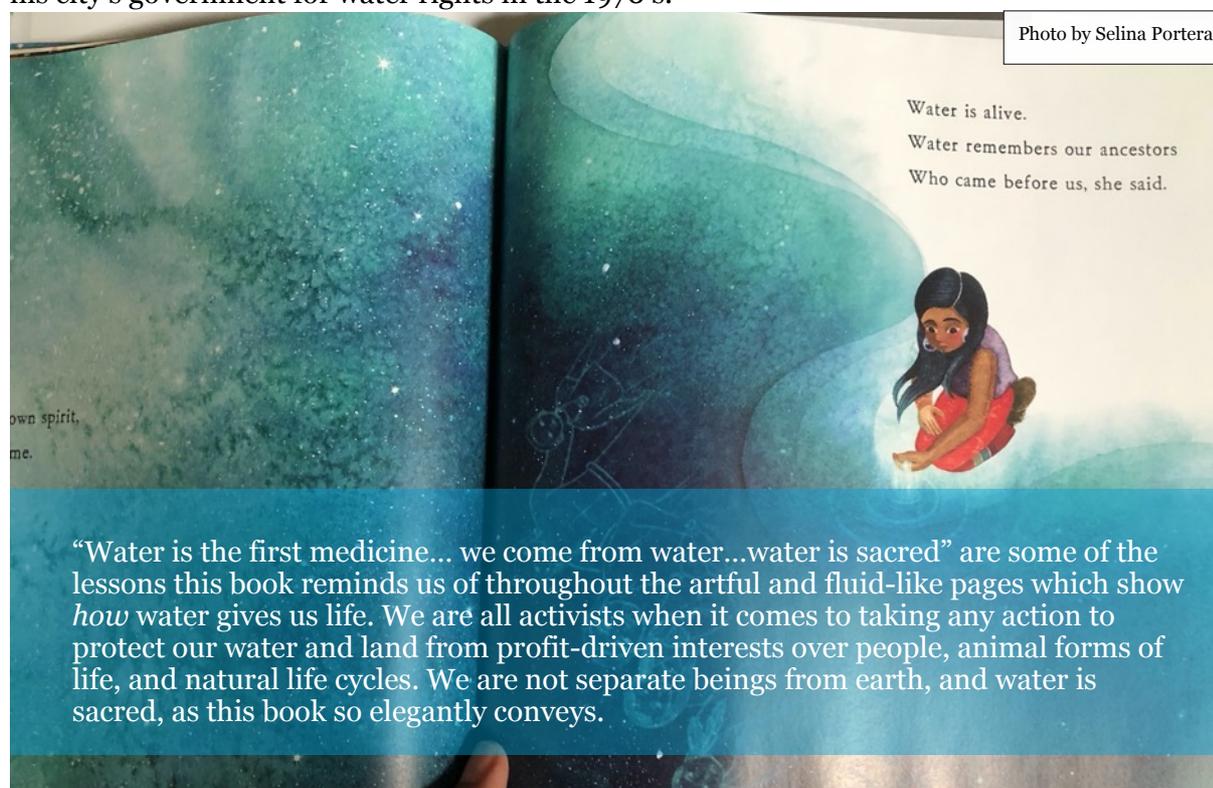
Amanda Arbouin is the author of *Black British Graduates* (London: Trentham Book, 2018), and will be on the BGU Campus on 7 October, promoting her new book as part of Black History Month.  
<https://www.bishopg.ac.uk/black-history-month>

## *We are Water Protectors* by Carole Lindstrom

BY SELINA PORTERA, PHD STUDENT, DEPT OF INFORMATION STUDIES, UCLA

*We are Water Protectors* (New York: Roaring Brook Press, 2020) is a beautifully illustrated children's book inspired by the Standing Rock uprising against the Dakota Access oil pipeline (oil pipelines are known as black snakes) and about the ongoing, Indigenous-led activism for water protection that have been roaring for centuries throughout the Americas. It is written and illustrated by Indigenous creators in the United States. The author, Carole Lindstrom, is Anishinabe/Metis and of the Turtle Mountain Band of Ojibwe within the United States. The Illustrator, Michaela Goade is a member of Tlinget and Haida Tribes within Alaska.

One of the best things about this book is that through vivid imagery and language for all ages every page helpfully brings to life basic concepts and information for adults to get acquainted with one of the most urgent issues facing sacred lands—access to clean water and life. For people who are not familiar with Native American and Indigenous cultures, the book is presented in a way that is historical and can be read as non-fiction for those of us who are Native to these lands. It brings back memories for my American Indian father who was involved in fighting back against his city's government for water rights in the 1970's.



“Water is the first medicine... we come from water...water is sacred” are some of the lessons this book reminds us of throughout the artful and fluid-like pages which show *how* water gives us life. We are all activists when it comes to taking any action to protect our water and land from profit-driven interests over people, animal forms of life, and natural life cycles. We are not separate beings from earth, and water is sacred, as this book so elegantly conveys.

Although it is intended as a children's book to help provide a basic, early understanding of caring for the earth from an Indigenous perspective, I find that the adults that I have recommended this book to have also learned about the traditional ways, pre-colonization, and pre-industry. Earth and water are our relatives, in a reciprocal relationship, as opposed to viewing water just as a resource or commodity. We must take care of it the way it takes care of us.

Indigenous, Native people, and allies in ongoing movements, which have been gaining traction with the help of social media's word-of-mouth, and more recently through books like this one, want enforcement of treaties and water rights on their own lands. They have been hurt, jailed, imprisoned, and murdered by faceless corporations and corrupt governments. Children and young people become empowered, gaining self-awareness with the help of books like these. “We are stewards of the Earth. Our spirits have not been broken. We are water protectors. WE STAND! The black snake is in for the fight of its life.” This book shows us that it is always okay to fight for what is right, and that together we can be powerful.

*We are the Water Protectors* (New York: Roaring Brook Press, 2020) is available from the BGU Library.

## *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* by Mildred Taylor

BY VALERIE WADE, HISTORIAN AND ARCHIVIST, LYNNFIELD HISTORICAL CONSULTING

If I had to name a book that helped me understand the world around me, it would be Mildred D. Taylor's *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*\* first published in 1976. This classic won the Newbery Medal in 1977. I cannot remember exactly whether someone gifted it to me when I was in elementary school in the 1990s, or if I found it myself. Either scenario is plausible because I was a notoriously bookish child who found solace in libraries and bookstores. I approached the annual book fair with seriousness and enthusiasm, carefully spreading out the colourful brochure, circling the books I wanted and adding up the prices so that I could present a solid case to my mother for a small fortune for purchases. I imagine that I discovered *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* this way. The cover image of Cassie Logan on the porch with the fire blazing in the background gripped me. Most children's books didn't have a cover image that evoked such gravitas, and I was intrigued.

From the first chapter, *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* invites readers into the world of the Logan family, who all live in Mississippi during the Great Depression. Cassie, an observant and clever nine-year-old girl, narrates the world around her as she becomes aware of race and class discrimination. Her family is unique in that they managed to own 400 acres of land at a time when many Black Americans were sharecroppers. As such, her family has financial stability in their community, but this stability is accompanied by increased hostility from racists in their town. Cassie and her brothers have several experiences, some comical, others serious, that paint an unforgettable portrait of life in the rural South during the Jim Crow era.

What made this book special to me is the way Taylor made an unfamiliar time feel relatable. As a nine-year-old in East Texas, I found commonalities with Cassie as she sought to understand the actions of her older brother and the adults in her family. There are some people who feel that the themes in the book are divisive, but it simply offers a straightforward depiction of the realities of racism in the United States. Taylor was not overly didactic or preachy in tone. She wrote an enthralling page-turner that will hold the attention of readers of all ages as they seek to figure out the mystery of the large fire. Although we are nearly a century removed from the setting of *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* the themes of family, resistance, and community are just as relevant today as young people grapple with various social issues.

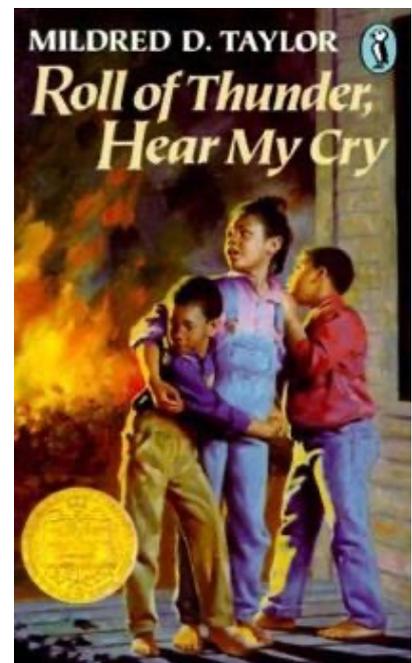


Photo of an American edition, courtesy of Valerie Wade.

\* Taylor, Mildred D. *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. London: Gollancz, 1977.

Valerie Wade will be presenting 'Black women as educators and social activists' at a BGU Black History Month event on Wednesday 13th October 2021 from 5pm - 7pm. Online and in-person from the Hardy Building Seminar Room 1. For details to book please see: <https://www.bishopg.ac.uk/black-history-month>

## ***Brown Girl Dreaming*** written by Jacqueline Woodson

BY MARY-LOUISE MAYNES, SENIOR LECTURER IN EARLY CHILDHOOD STUDIES

*Brown Girl Dreaming* by Jacqueline Woodson (New York: Nancy Paulsen Books, 2014) is variously described as a verse novel, a memoir, an autobiography, and a collection of poems. It is all of those things – a book which gripped me enough to read at one sitting, but also one which I have dipped back in to on many occasions discovering something new at each re-reading. The book takes the form of a series of short free verse poems about Woodson’s childhood growing up in Ohio, South Carolina, and New York during the 1960s when the Civil Rights movement was at its height and slavery and segregation were tangible memories:

*In downtown Greenville  
They painted over the WHITE ONLY signs...  
they didn't use a lot of paint  
so you still see the words, right there  
like a ghost standing in front still keeping you out.*



Photo by Mary-Louise Maynes

The language is sparse and beautifully simple, and the poems are like catches of memories in which personal and political are inseparable: travelling at the back of the bus (‘we’re as good as anybody my mother whispers, as good as anybody’), her grandparents’ garden in the south (‘my grandfather missed slavery by one generation’), a visit to the shops avoiding the places in town where her grandmother will not take her (‘at the fabric store we’re just people’). Identity and place are key themes, but although the poems recall a very particular place and historical time, Woodson shows her growing sense of identity, rooted in family and language, in a way which would resonate with many young people growing up today.

---

## ***Cilla Lee-Jenkins: Future Author Extraordinaire*** by Susan Tan

BY AMY WEBSTER, SENIOR LECTURER IN EDUCATION

This engaging, lively yet incredibly thoughtful 2017 book by Susan Tan is the first in the Cilla Lee-Jenkins series (New York: Roaring Brooks Press). It addresses issues of diversity, inclusion, heritage and belonging through the childlike mindset or lens of the main character Cilla who is a Chinese-American child. In her attempts to be a bestselling author Cilla writes about her life. In particular she writes about her questions surrounding her heritage and the challenges she faces being bi-racial and having to navigate, and be inducted into, the different cultures of both her American grandparents, Grandma and Grandpa Jenkins, and her Chinese grandparents, Nai Nai and Ye Ye. Cilla wonders about the differences between her grandparents in terms of appearance, language, approach to mealtimes and days of celebration and has to process multiple confusing contradictions such as contrasting approaches to etiquette in cultures.

Throughout the book Cilla constantly feels a strong sense of alienation and struggles with her identity – knowing who she is and where she belongs. This struggle is exacerbated by how she constantly faces the ‘What are you?’ question by classmates and strangers. The story, however, challenges society’s need to label and define people by their nationality, as Cilla confronts the askers of this question, and conveys how identity is complex and nuanced. Whilst the differences between the two sides of Cilla’s family are clear, Tan also emphasises their similarities through literary elements of the text to convey that her relatives are not so different (despite what they think). The book ends on a hopeful note as the birth of Cilla’s new sibling brings the two sets of grandparents together – ‘Lee and Jenkins alike’.

## Surprising, Thoughtful and/or Fun Interpretations of the Traditional Grimms' Fairy Tales

BY SIBYLLE ERLE, READER IN ENGLISH LITERATURE



Detail of *The Wolf's Story*

I grew up with the Grimms' Fairy Tales and knew that they had been collected from people who had once lived in my local area of Germany. These stories have always spoken to me. *Rotkäpchen* (Brothers Grimm *Kinder-und Hausmärchen*, 1812) is my favourite. I used to escape from my house to explore the forest. I'd spend hours daydreaming there. I loved the character of Little Red Riding Hood (LRRH), who went into the forest and was curious. As a child, I had not heard Perrault's version of the story, where she actually gets *into* bed with the wolf. The Grimms' version had added a woodcutter or hunter character, a figure that academics interpret as the missing but necessary 'father' who rescues his girl. Therefore, the moral of the story to me was that you should listen to your mother and don't dilly dally on the way.

I always wondered, however, why the mother never warned her daughter about the wolf; and how could LRRH not know what a wolf looked like?! How could she mistake a wolf for her grandmother? In the story, it says that the wolf drew the curtains so that she couldn't see properly. And yet, the hunter figured out immediately that a wolf, and not a grandmother, was snoring in that bed.

Since I grew up without grandmothers, the wolf was a more real figure to me and I saw the wolf as a real beast. He was not supernatural, nor a metaphor for a sexually aggressive male. I knew what they looked like; observing wolves in the local nature reserve was one of the most exciting things of my early childhood. Many scientists and environmental activists support wolves' reintroduction into natural spaces to bring balance to predator-prey relationships, thereby boosting the quality of life of entire local ecologies. They also argue that fairy tales gave wolves a bad reputation. I remain torn. I knew and know the real, actual wolf is an intelligent predator. They hunt in packs and live in families. In a way, they are like us.

I reconnected with the story when I started preparing for the BGU Masterclass on Fairy Tales in early 2021, advertised for BGU's masters students. At the same time, I was thrilled to learn that my children were also doing school work on this traditional folk tale. This was during the second Covid-19 lockdown, when I took responsibility for their homeschooling. With them, I watched the videos produced by their teachers during lockdown, and learned about Toby Forward and Izhar Cohen's *The Wolf's Story: What Really Happened to Little Red Riding Hood* (London: Walker Books, 2005). Like them, I was hooked – we followed the trail of the wolf and discovered more books in BGU's Teaching Resources Collection. Try the innovative interpretations found in Mini Grey's *The Last Wolf: Red Riding Hood Goes Green* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2018) and Lynn Roberts-Maloney and David Roberts's *Little Red: a Fizzingly Good Yarn* (London: Chrysalis, 2005). I particularly love how they incorporate the vanishing forests. If you prefer versions that incorporate a more female-centred experience, try Jackie Morris's *Little Evie in the Wild Wood* (London: Frances Lincoln, 2013). Our absolute star is William Grill's *The Wolves of Currumpaw* (London: Flying Eye Books, 2016). I cried when I read it.

I found out that Grill was drawing upon 'Lobo, the King of the Currumpaw', as described by the hunter-turned naturalist Ernest Thompson Seton. I immediately ordered *Wild Animals I Have Known* (Lanham: Start Publishing, 2012). The Hunter in LRRH doesn't kill the wolf and Seton deeply regrets that he killed Lobo ... This story changed our lives. My boys acted out the lives and deaths of Lobo and Blanca, the white she-wolf at his side, in the wasteland west of the B1398. As they disappeared down the hill and into the woods, I was picking wildflowers. Which I know I should not have done.

## *The Wiggle Washers and their Stolen Hearts* by Naadia Kidy Illustrated by Damilola Idowu

BY CLARE LAWRENCE, SENIOR LECTURE IN TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

The Wiggle Washers (Leicester: Durban Milk Publishing, 2017) explores what it is like to be an outsider, to be rejected, to feel jealous and to act spitefully. It carries a message of acceptance and reconciliation, and the content is both positive and interesting – although richness of language is sometimes sacrificed in favour of rhyme.

What makes the book interesting for me, though, is the successful use of cultural ambiguity. The main character's name is Optulogi, and the fictional world of the Wiggle Washers is obscure: there is no hint that it is a thin veil to hide a world that it is, in fact, white, middle-class and neurotypical. This impression is supported by the illustrations by autistic artist Damilola Idowu which give the book an immediacy and universality that is unusual and very welcome. The book is not about a Black character; it is not about an autistic character. However, it manages to convey an acceptance of cultural richness that spans identities of race and neurodiversity in a way that I find most impressive.

## Pop'n' Olly and Black History Month Texts

BY ENYA MENICHINI, PGCE SECONDARY ENGLISH

Pop'n'Olly is a YouTube channel popular among young children and their parents who have been using it for years to find engaging and informative 'edutainment' resources, or as creator Olly Pike puts it, around LGBT+ and equality issues and topics. Following his success online, Pike has started creating books, writing and illustrating stories of inclusivity, respect and acceptance. Often taking inspiration from well-known tales (e.g., *The princess and the pea*), Pike aims to make sure people – and specifically, children and young adults – of all genders, sexualities, abilities and ethnicities are represented. Many of his books – *What Does LGBT+ Mean?*, *Jamie*, and *Princess Penny and the Pea*, to name a few – have been distributed to primary schools and, alongside hundreds of educational resources and videos produced by Pike himself, have become an indispensable tool for teachers and parents interested in teaching about inclusion, equality and diversity.

To celebrate Black History month, I recommend *The Prince and the Frog*, a retelling of '*the Princess and the Frog*' that teaches children about same-sex relationships. It features two siblings – Alex and Caroline – as they start discovering their sexuality after meeting Alex, a frog who once was a prince and now awaits his true love's kiss. Alternatively, *Goldilocks & the Five Bear Families* is an excellent tool to question the idea of 'normality' when applied to families and what they look like. The heroine Goldilocks encounters five families, all seemingly different from each other and yet more similar than how they look.

Although neither of the books explicitly addresses issues or topics related to race, they do deal with inclusivity and diversity, and they revolve around non-white characters. As examples of children's books offering an intersectional representation of both non-white and LGBT+ (or disabled) characters are still scarce, it is great to see Pike's works in primary school libraries.

**LGBT+ Children's Books**

Check out our fantastic range of inclusive books for children.

Our books are used in classrooms and homes across the UK, and beyond, to teach about equality and diversity, whilst ultimately helping to combat ideas of prejudice before they can begin.

**'Educators trust these resources, not just for their pupils, but for their own children too.'**

- David Braniff-Herbert, National Education Union

Screenshot of the Pop'n'Olly website section on inclusive books

## Black History Month Events, October 2021

In honour of Black History Month BGU Library will have a series of book displays and as selection of picture books + novels for Key Stage 2 and 3.

We will also host **Story Telling** in the Library for the Children of BGU Students and Staff on Tuesday and Thursday 26 October, 2021 and 28 October, 2021. Sessions on both days start at 11 am and 2pm

Please book these events here:  
<https://libcal.bishopg.ac.uk/calendar/library>



TRC books, Photo by Rose Roberto

Please also check out events at the URL / QR Code below:



## Reading for Pleasure Project

Hello readers! As BGU's Student Ambassadors in the UK Literacy Association (UKLA)/ Open University (OU) Reading for Pleasure (RfP) project, we wanted to introduce ourselves, set out what our role is and let you know about how you can get involved!

Our names are Emma and Nicole, we are third year Primary Education students, and we are part of the UKLA and OU's project which aims to enrich the conversations we have as trainee teachers about RfP. Over the course of the year, we will be meeting with the UKLA and OU alongside other Student Ambassadors from the program to bring together our ideas and initiatives. But we will not be able to do it without the help of our peers. At the start of this semester, we will be launching a Padlet (online bulletin board) for posting our ideas, conversations and recommendations for developing your knowledge and pedagogy around RfP. Once the Padlet is live, we will be inviting fellow students to contribute their own ideas, share their passion and tell others how they promote RfP in the classroom. If you want to get involved but you are unsure where to start, a great way to get stuck in is to sign up to the Open University's Reading for Pleasure newsletter by emailing: [emma.rogers@bishopg.ac.uk](mailto:emma.rogers@bishopg.ac.uk). This will equip you with all the latest news around the topic and will give you some food for thought on how to start thinking more about promoting RfP. We will be posting further details shortly about how to access our Padlet!

If you have questions or are interested in joining the RfP Change Initiative, please contact Emma Dexter ([B1903404@student.bishopg.ac.uk](mailto:B1903404@student.bishopg.ac.uk)) or Nicole McGarrell ([B1904304@student.bishopg.ac.uk](mailto:B1904304@student.bishopg.ac.uk)).

## Reading Groups

Organised By Emma Rogers, Senior Lecturer in Primary Education

If you are interested in developing reading for pleasure or just finding out more about children's books, then there are two great groups that you can join. The first is run here at BGU, although most sessions will take place on-line. The Teachers' Reading Group is a great opportunity to meet teachers and student teachers to discuss strategies to support and develop children's reading for pleasure. The second group, the Student Teachers Reading Group is a group run by a number of universities, giving you the opportunity to talk about books with students around the country and hear from some of the leading lecturers on their areas of speciality.

For further information about either group please email: [emma.rogers@bishopg.ac.uk](mailto:emma.rogers@bishopg.ac.uk)

---

### Student Teachers Reading Group

Bishop Grosseteste University invites anyone committed to developing children's desire, delight and engagement as readers to join our online OU/UKLA Reading Group. Informal, friendly and supportive we welcome teachers, librarians, student teachers and support staff to join us for five virtual CPD sessions.

We will be developing evidence-informed practice, widening our knowledge of children's literature and other texts, enriching our RfP pedagogy and documenting the impact on the young people as readers. The following dates indicate future topics.

4th October 2021 – Introducing the TRG and reviewing practice

4th November 2021 – Identifying areas of focus and celebrating Non-fiction November

11th January 2022– Exploring RfP and finding a place for poetry

25th April 2022– Exploring RfP and tempting reluctant readers

8th June 2022– Celebrating RfP and sharing great practice

All these sessions run from: 4.15 - 6.00

To book a place, register here: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/ouukla-bgu-teachers-reading-group-tickets-163649517111>

For further details email [Emma.Rogers@bishopg.ac.uk](mailto:Emma.Rogers@bishopg.ac.uk)  
[www.research-rich-pedagogies/readingforpleasure](http://www.research-rich-pedagogies/readingforpleasure)

Does children's literature interest you?

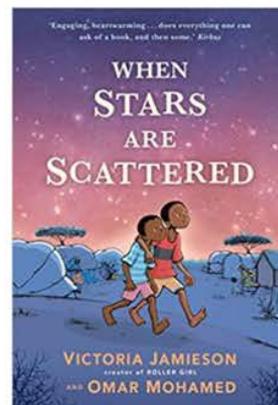
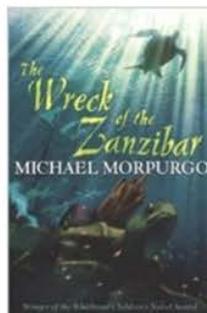
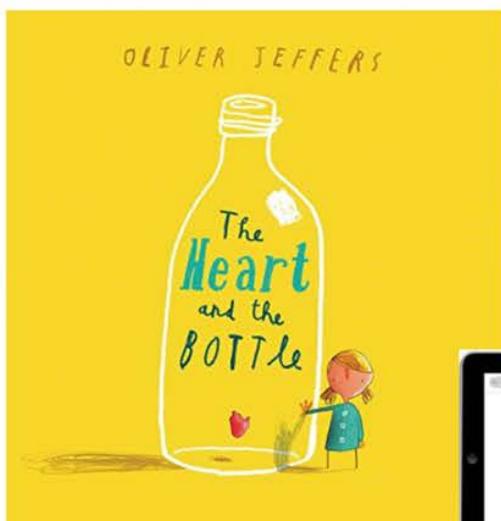
Check out the BGU course:

**MA in Children's Literature and Literacies**

**[www.bishopg.ac.uk/courses/childrensliterature](http://www.bishopg.ac.uk/courses/childrensliterature)**

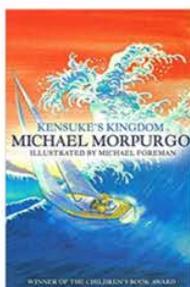


# Reading Student Teachers' Club

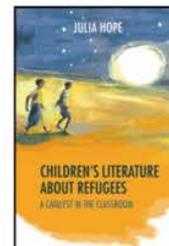


**Wednesday 7-8 pm**

Oct 6th, Nov 3rd, Dec 8th, 2021  
Jan 5th, Feb 2nd, Mar 2nd, Apr 6th, 2022



**This is an informal student reading group that offers space for discussing texts that can be used in the classroom with children of all ages.**



Discussions around:

Reading practices, picturebook and apps, comics & graphic novels, new publications, diversity, refugee journeys, chapter books



*Relax...have a coffee... and talk about children's books*



Edited by Rose Roberto and Amy Webster. All illustrations used by permission of the rights holders.

Other issues of **The 4 corners** are online at: [www.bishopg.ac.uk/student/campus/library/fourcorners](http://www.bishopg.ac.uk/student/campus/library/fourcorners)