

Book Reviews

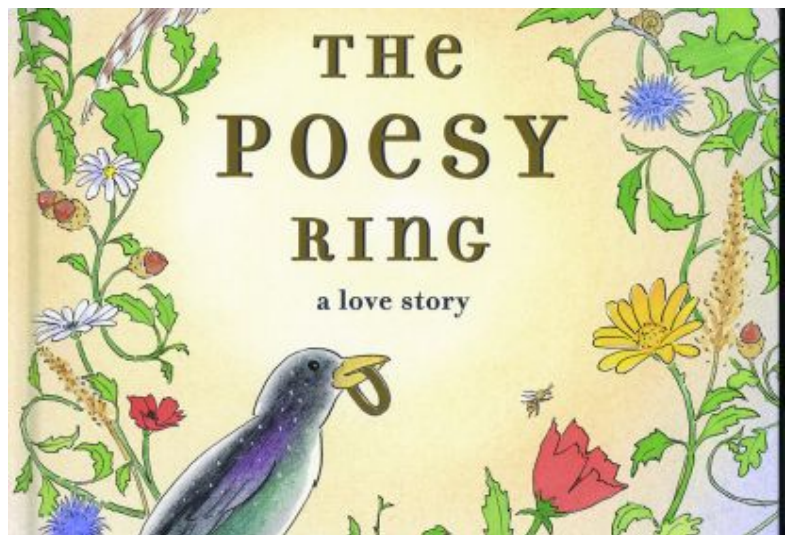
August 22, 2018

The Poesy Ring

by Bob Graham, Walker Books, 2018

This gentle, heartwarming story tells how a poesy ring — a gift of friendship and love dating back to the Middle Ages — finds its way across the Atlantic Ocean from 1830s Ireland to 1960s New York. Bob Graham's illustrations beautifully capture this 130-year journey that begins when a young woman throws away her ring in a moment of anguish. The forces of time and nature eventually bring the ring to a New York pawn shop, where a couple visit on their way home after a day of busking and the piece of jewellery finds a finger once more.

The book reveals how even the simplest act of throwing away a ring can have ramifications for the future. It ponders other questions such as where might the ring be today, whether destiny connects people and places of the past through the enduring force of nature, and if love is the most enduring force of all.



Here I Stand: Stories that Speak for Freedom

Edited by Amnesty International UK, Walker Books, 2016

This powerful collection of confronting stories shines a light on the damaging impacts of neoliberalism on the lives of the most vulnerable members of society: children and young people. Around the world, human rights are being undermined as inequality has exponentially accelerated, condemning too many young people to a life of poverty, violence and abuse.

The award-winning authors of *Here I Stand* write gut-wrenching stories of discrimination and exploitation within the context of human rights. An anthology of stories, poems and cartoons, plus an interview with whistleblower Chelsea Manning, highlights many issues relating to children and young people being abused, discriminated against, recruited into violence and marginalised. The book addresses themes such as what's it like to be on death row; what it's like to be a child soldier; how girls' rights are violated; why are human rights so important; why we must protest to defend our freedom; and whether a fear of terrorism is destroying our freedom.

Populism Now! The Case for Progressive Populism

by David McKnight, NewSouth, 2018

David McKnight presents a strong case for the need to strengthen the progressive version of populism. He argues it has a history dating back to the 1900s when US workers opposed the exploitative power of US bank and railway barons.

Populism Now! challenges neoliberalism which has dominated our economic system for the last 30 years, resulting in a widening gulf between the super rich and the rest of society.

McKnight is adamant the only way to solve the current climate change crisis, which is causing distress and suffering around the world, is through strong progressive populism. He says corporate greed will never solve it and instead suggests strong progressive populist action to protect the earth's life support systems.

McKnight explains how neoliberal economic policies of the last three decades have destroyed government policies that serve the common good of society. Neoliberal policies of privatisation, deregulation and outsourcing have transferred the democratic power of governments to private corporations. This has given rise to a global right-wing populist backlash that blames migrants and refugees instead of blaming economic policies that have disempowered a majority of the population.

Teachers have a long and proud history of supporting progressive populist movements in the knowledge that when corporate power elites talk about the economy, the real casualty is the children they teach.

All three of these books are available from Federation's library. Look up suggestions for classroom activities in the digital edition of Education.

Janine Kitson is a Federation Life Member

Julián is a Mermaid

by Jessica Love, Walker Books Australia, 2018

While travelling home on the New York subway from a day at the pools with his abuela (grandmother in Spanish), Julián becomes transfixed by three beautiful mermaids who enter the train. The vivid illustrations that follow allow the reader to be lost in a state of dreamy reverie with Julián as he imagines his transformation into a mermaid. His dreams are interrupted when they arrive at their stop and he asks his abuela if she also saw the mermaids on the train.

When he returns home, Julian creates his own mermaid outfit using items found around the house. But what will abuela say when she sees him? She offers a necklace to complete the outfit! To celebrate and affirm Julián's non-conforming gender identity, she takes him to join in the Mermaid Parade of Coney Island, joining the mermaids he saw on the train.

This stunning picture book is suitable for use across all years P-6. With simple text and breathtaking imagery, Jessica Love explores themes of gender fluidity, belonging, celebration and family. The text can be used for discussion during modelled reading, visual literacy, modelling of expert writing and visual arts lessons.

Alicia Heymel teaches at Earlwood Public School

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

The Poesy Ring

Geography K-10

Stage 3

A Diverse and Connected World

Outcomes

A student:

Explains interactions and connections between people, places and environments GE3-2

Small group/pair discussion:

1. What events and circumstances might have led the opening scene of the book: "County Kerry, west coast of Ireland, 1830. Bitter tears were shed, and a ring was thrown"?
2. What might be the significance of a flock of birds on the inside and back cover of the book?
3. How is the environment of Country Kerry and New York similar and/or different?

Suggestions for learning activities:

1. Research what was happening in Ireland in 1830? New York in 1967?
2. Make a timeline of the events in the book.

3. Write up a natural history of the geography and environment of the book that includes forests, oceans, wildlife, marine life and migratory birds

Here I Stand

English:

Stage 5

Outcome 5

A student: thinks imaginatively, creatively, interpretively and critically about information and increasingly complex ideas and arguments to respond to and compose texts in a range of contexts EN5-5C

Small group/pair discussion:

1. Which stories made you feel sad, frightened, distressed?
2. Which stories gave you courage?
3. Which story did you think highlighted best the importance of human rights?

Suggestions for learning activities:

1. Turn one story into a dance.
2. Turn one story into a news item.
3. Turn one story into a letter to a friend.

Populism Now!

Self Study for NSW Teachers Federation members at your school

Small group/pair discussion:

1. What issues does David McKnight raise about progressive populism that is important for teacher unionists?
2. How can David McKnight's ideas be integrated into a talk about *Fair Funding Now* for your P&C.
3. How has the issues of privatisation and "choice" diminished the ethos of public education?

Suggestions for learning activities:

1. Organise a school meeting to discuss the book's ideas and how they can assist with the campaign *Fair Funding Now* www.fairfundingnow.org.au
2. Attend your local teacher association meeting requesting an agenda item to allow discussion about the book's ideas and share with other teachers.
3. Organise a delegation of Federation members to attend your P&C meeting to talk about how the book illuminates why *Fair Funding Now* matters.