An illustration of two children sitting on a thick tree branch. The child on the left is wearing a plaid shirt, and the child on the right is wearing a red polka-dot shirt. They are surrounded by falling orange and yellow leaves. The tree trunk is on the right side of the frame.

social and emotional learning

diverse reading list

Discover our educator favorites for SEL read-alouds to pair with your curriculum!

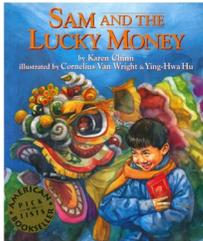
These exemplar texts will help you model and explore strategies for tackling challenges and building community. Both fiction and nonfiction titles feature protagonists from diverse backgrounds and are written by award-winning authors and illustrators.

Check each Lee & Low book's link for corresponding lesson ideas and activities.

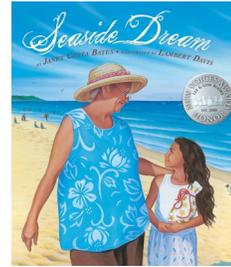
empathy

teaching students the ability to understand the feelings of another person

grades preK-2

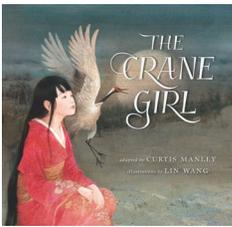


Sam and the Lucky Money • written by Karen Chinn, illustrated by Cornelius Van Wright & Ying-Hwa Hu • When a young Chinese American boy sets out to spend the lucky money he receives for Chinese New Year, he discovers that no gift is too small when it comes from the heart. (Also available in Chinese and Spanish.) • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/sam-and-the-lucky-money>

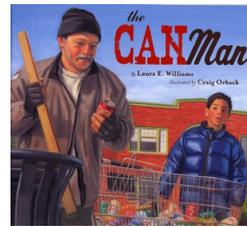


Seaside Dream • written by Janet Costa Bates, illustrated by Lambert Davis • At a beachside birthday party, a young girl finds a way to give her grandmother the perfect present plus the courage to plan a trip to her home country, Cape Verde. • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/seaside-dream>

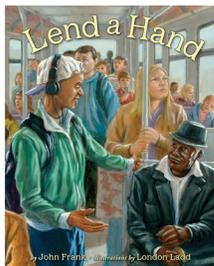
grades 3-5



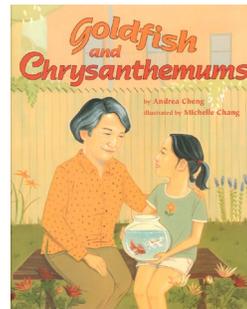
The Crane Girl • written by Curtis Manley, illustrated by Lin Wang • A boy helps an injured crane, which then returns in human form to weave silk and save the boy and his father from poverty. Adapted from Japanese folktales and told in alternating prose and haiku. • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-crane-girl>



The Can Man • written by Laura E. Williams, illustrated by Craig Orback • To earn money, a young boy decides to collect and redeem empty cans, but ends up giving his money away to a homeless man. • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-can-man>

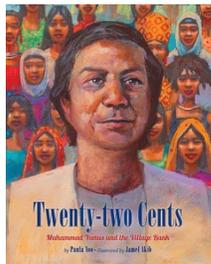


Lend a Hand: Poems About Giving • written by John Frank, illustrated by London Ladd • Poems about sharing and making a small difference in someone's life. • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/lend-a-hand>

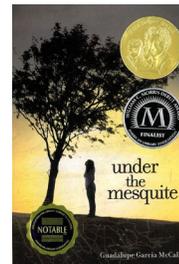


Goldfish & Chrysanthemums • written by Andrea Cheng, illustrated by Michelle Chang • A Chinese American girl helps preserve fond childhood memories for her grandmother by creating a special garden. • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/goldfish-and-chrysanthemums>

grades 6-8



Twenty-two Cents: Muhammad Yunus and the Village Bank • written by Paula Yoo, illustrated by Jamel Akib • A biography of 2006 Nobel Peace Prize winner Muhammad Yunus, who revolutionized antipoverty efforts by developing the innovative concept of micro-lending. • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/twenty-two-cents>

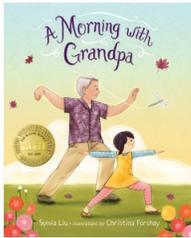


Under the Mesquite • written by Guadalupe Garcia McCall • Lupita, a budding actor and poet in a close-knit Mexican American immigrant family, comes of age as she struggles with adult responsibilities during her mother's long illness. • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/under-the-mesquite>

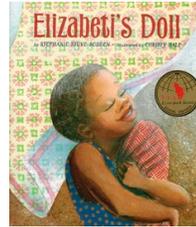
positive relationships

teaching students how to interact with others in respectful & kind ways

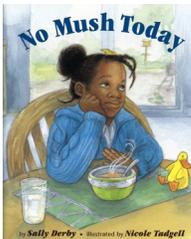
grades preK-2



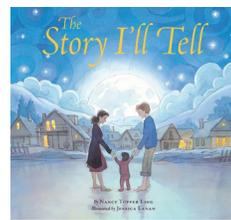
A Morning with Grandpa • written by Sylvia Liu, illustrated by Christina Forshay • A curious and active little girl spends the day learning tai chi from her grandfather, and in turn tries to teach him how to do yoga. • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/a-morning-with-grandpa>



Elizabeti's Doll • written by Stephanie Stuve-Bodeen, illustrated by Christy Hale • As her mother cares for a new baby, a young African girl learns about motherhood from her own very special doll. This award-winning story is a universal tale of love. (Also available in Spanish.) • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/elizabeti-s-doll>

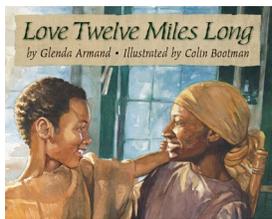


No Mush Today • written by Sally Derby, illustrated by Nicole Tadgell • A young girl rebels against eating mush for breakfast every day, seeks solace with her grandmother, and eventually realizes there's no place like home. • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/no-mush-today>

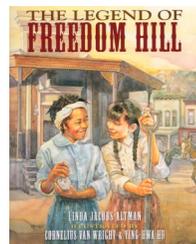


The Story I'll Tell • written by Nancy Tupper Ling, illustrated by Jessica Lanan • A gentle and moving story of adoption and parental love that is sure to touch the hearts of readers everywhere, no matter how they came to be a family. • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-story-i-ll-tell>

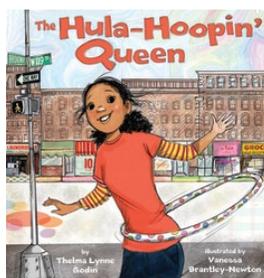
grades 3-5



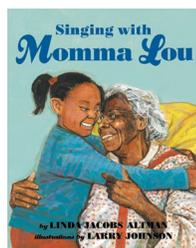
Love Twelve Miles Long • written by Glenda Armand, illustrated by Colin Bootman • Set on a plantation in the 1820s in Maryland, this story based on the life of young Frederick Douglass shows the power of his mother's love. • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/love-twelve-miles-long>



The Legend of Freedom Hill • written by Linda Jacobs Altman, illustrated by Cornelius Van Wright and Ying-Hwa Hu • In this fictional story set during the California Gold Rush, an African American girl teams up with her best friend, a Jewish girl, to find gold and buy her mother's freedom from a slave catcher. • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-legend-of-freedom-hill>



The Hula-Hoopin' Queen • written by Thelma Lynne Godin, illustrated by Vanessa Brantley-Newton • A spunky African American girl has a hula-hooping competition with her friends in Harlem, and soon everyone in the neighborhood, young and old alike, joins in on the fun. • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-hula-hoopin-queen>

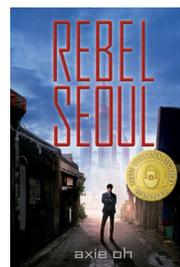


Singing with Momma Lou • written by Linda Jacobs Altman, illustrated by Larry Johnson • A little girl searches for a way to help her grandmother, who suffers from Alzheimer's, restore her memories. • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/singing-with-momma-lou>

grades 6-8



Summer of the Mariposas • written by Guadalupe Garcia McCall • In this creative retelling of *The Odyssey*, fifteen-year-old Odilia and her younger sisters embark on a journey to return a dead man to his family in Mexico, and must outwit monsters and witches to make it back home again. • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/summer-of-the-mariposas>

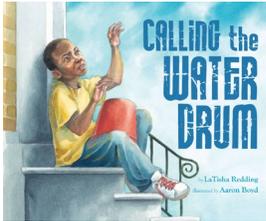


Rebel Seoul • written by Axie Oh • When Jaewon is assigned to partner with supersoldier Tera in Neo Seoul's top weapons development division, he must decide where he stands: with the people his rebel father protected or with the totalitarian government that claims it will end all war. • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/rebel-seoul>

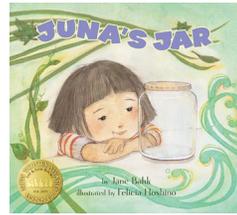
recognizing & managing emotions

teaching students how to handle their feelings

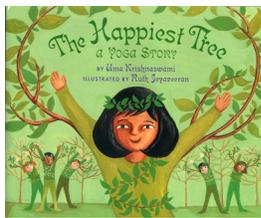
grades preK-2



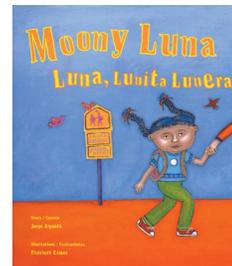
Calling the Water Drum • written by LaTisha Redding, illustrated by Aaron Boyd • After a young Haitian boy loses his parents as they attempt to flee Haiti in a boat, he can only communicate with the outside world through playing his drum. • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/calling-the-water-drum>



Juna's Jar • written by Jane Bahk, illustrated by Felicia Hoshino • Juna, an imaginative Korean American girl, goes on magical adventures, by way of her special kimchi jar, in search of her best friend who moved away. • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/juna-s-jar>

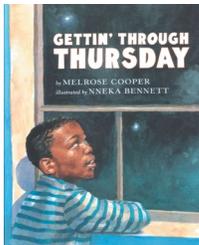


The Happiest Tree: A Yoga Story • written by Uma Krishnaswami, illustrated by Ruth Jeyaveeran • A young Indian American girl grows in self-confidence when she learns to practice yoga and apply the underlying principles to her performance in a school play. (Also available in Spanish.) • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-happiest-tree>

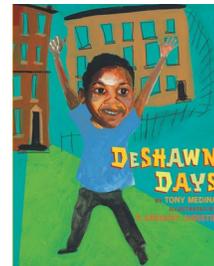


Moony Luna/Luna Lunita Lunera • written by Jorge Argueta, illustrated by Elizabeth Gómez • A loving tale about a young girl afraid to go to school for the first time. (Bilingual English/Spanish) • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/moony-luna-luna-lunita-lunera>

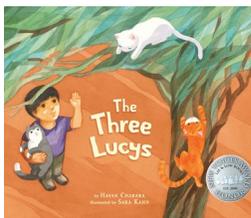
grades 3-5



Gettin' Through Thursday • written by Melrose Cooper, illustrated by Nneka Bennett • A young African American boy experiences the love and support of his family as they try to make ends meet each week. • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/gettin-through-thursday>



DeShawn Days • written by Tony Medina, illustrated by R. Gregory Christie • In this uplifting story told in verse, a young boy living in the projects of the inner city speaks about his hopes, fears, and dreams. • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/deshawn-days>

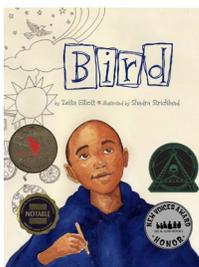


The Three Lucys • written by Hayan Charara, illustrated by Sara Kahn • When his village comes under attack and he loses one of his beloved cats, a young Lebanese boy must learn to hope for a peaceful future. • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-three-lucys>



Kiki's Journey • written by Kristy Orona-Ramirez, illustrated by Jonathan Warm Day • Kiki's tender story sensitively portrays the rewards and challenges of contemporary Indian life, as Kiki grapples with her Tiwa Indian heritage and Los Angeles city roots. • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/kiki-s-journey>

grades 6-8



Bird • written by Zetta Elliott, illustrated by Shadra Strickland • An African American boy nicknamed Bird uses drawing as a creative outlet as he struggles to make sense of his grandfather's death and his brother's drug addiction. • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/bird>

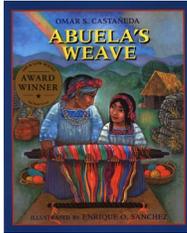


Chess Rumble • written by G. Neri, illustrated by Jesse Joshua Watson • In this longer story told in free verse, a troubled boy learns to use his mind instead of his fists through the guidance of an unconventional mentor and the game of chess. • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/chess-rumble>

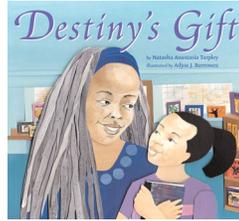
problem-solving

teaching students how to find a solution to a complicated issue or situation

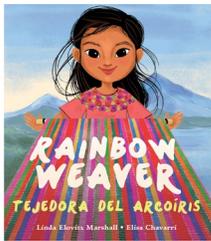
grades preK-2



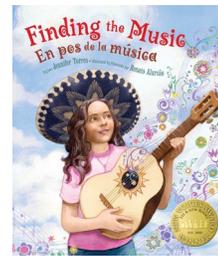
Abuela's Weave • written by Omar S. Castañeda, illustrated by Enrique O. Sanchez • Esperanza and her abuela love to weave together, but Abuela fears discrimination in the local market due to her birthmark. It's up to Esperanza to go to the market and sell their woven goods. (Also available in Spanish.) • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/abuela-s-weave>



Destiny's Gift • written by Natasha Anastasia Tarpley, illustrated by Adjoa J. Burrowes • Destiny tries to keep her friend's neighborhood bookstore from going out of business by using her resourcefulness and creativity. • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/destiny-s-gift>

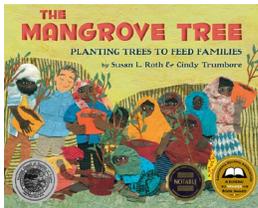


Rainbow Weaver/Tejedora del arcoiris • written by Linda Elovitz Marshall, illustrated by Elisa Chavarri • A young Mayan girl isn't allowed to use her mother's thread to weave, so with a little ingenuity, she discovers how to repurpose plastic bags to create colorful weavings. Based on an actual recycling movement in Guatemala. (Bilingual English/Spanish.) • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/rainbow-weaver-tejedora-del-arcoiris>

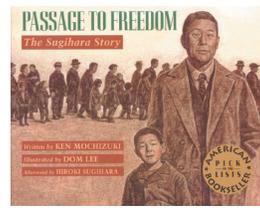


Finding the Music/En Pos de la Música • written by Jennifer Torres, illustrated by Renato Alarcão • In this bilingual book, a determined Latina girl accidentally breaks her grandfather's vihuela and ventures into her community to find someone who can fix the instrument, leading her to discover her grandfather's legacy as a mariachi player. (Bilingual English/Spanish) • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/finding-the-music-en-pos-de-la-musica>

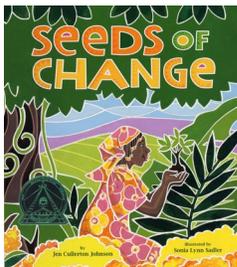
grades 3-5



The Mangrove Tree: Planting Trees to Feed Families • written by Susan L. Roth and Cindy Trumbore, illustrated by Susan L. Roth • With alternating verse and prose passages, readers discover how Dr. Gordon Sato's mangrove-tree planting project transformed an impoverished village in Eritrea into a self-sufficient community. • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/the-mangrove-tree>



Passage to Freedom: The Sugihara Story • written by Ken Mochizuki, illustrated by Dom Lee • As a Japanese diplomat in Lithuania in the 1940s, Chiune Sugihara had a chance to help thousands of Jews escape the Holocaust through Japan, but to do so would go against his government's orders. When his five-year-old son asked, "If we don't help them, won't they die?" Sugihara decided to assist the refugees. (Also available in Spanish.) • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/passage-to-freedom>

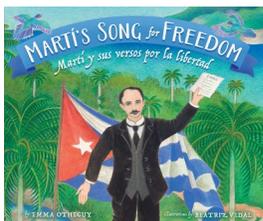


Seeds of Change: Planting a Path to Peace • written by Jen Cullerton Johnson, illustrated by Sonia Lynn Sadler • This picture book biography profiles scientist Wangari Maathi, the first African woman — and first environmentalist — to win a Nobel Peace Prize for her work planting trees in her native Kenya. • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/seeds-of-change>

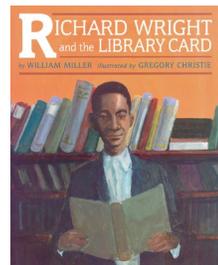


Irena's Jars of Secrets • written by Marcia Vaughan, illustrated by Ron Mazellan • A picture book biography of Irena Sendler, a Polish Catholic social worker who helped save nearly 2500 Jewish children during the Nazi occupation of Poland during World War II. • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/irena-s-jars-of-secrets>

grades 6-8



Martí's Song for Freedom/Martí y sus versos por la libertad • written by Emma Otheguy, illustrated by Beatriz Vidal • José Martí dedicated his life to the promotion of liberty: the abolishment of slavery, political independence for Cuba, and intellectual independence from colonialism for all Latinos. This bilingual biography is written in verse with excerpts from Martí's seminal work, *Versos Sencillos*. (Bilingual English/Spanish.) • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/marti-s-song-for-freedom-marti-y-sus-versos-por-la-libertad>

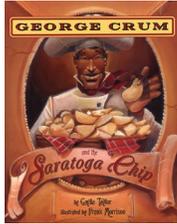


Richard Wright and the Library Card • written by William Miller, illustrated by R. Gregory Christie • This popular and award-winning book tells the true story of how the renowned African American author Richard Wright, as a young man in the segregated South, realized his dream to borrow and read books from the public library. (Also available in Spanish.) • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/richard-wright-and-the-library-card>

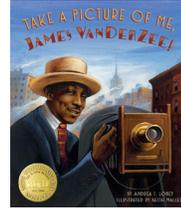
grit & perseverance

teaching students to achieve success despite difficulty or obstacles in the way

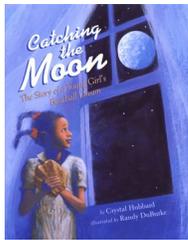
grades preK-2



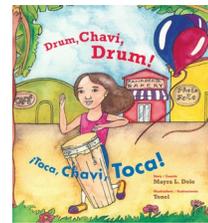
George Crum and the Saratoga Chip • written by Gaylia Taylor, illustrated by Frank Morrison • An account of the life and career of George Crum, a biracial chef who is credited with the invention of the potato chip at a Saratoga Springs, New York, restaurant in 1853. • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/george-crum-and-the-saratoga-chip>



Take a Picture of Me, James VanDerZee! • written by Andrea J. Loney, illustrated by Keith Mallett • A biography of James VanDerZee, innovative and celebrated African American photographer of the Harlem Renaissance. • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/take-a-picture-of-me-james-van-der-zee>

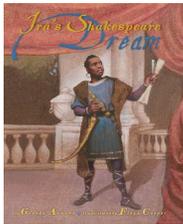


Catching the Moon: The Story of a Young Girl's Baseball Dream • written by Crystal Hubbard, illustrated by Randy DuBurke • The spirited story of Marcenia Lyle, the African American girl who grew up to become "Toni Stone," the first woman to play for an all-male professional baseball team. • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/catching-the-moon>

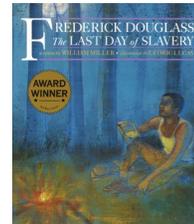


Drum, Chavi, Drum!/Toca, Chavi, Toca! • written by Mayra L. Dole, illustrated by Tonel • Even though nobody in her neighborhood thinks girls should play the drums, Chavi knows she was born to drum. (Bilingual English/Spanish) • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/drum-chavi-drum-toca-chavi-toca>

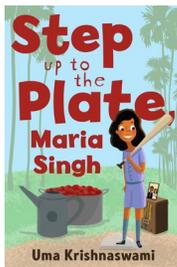
grades 3-5



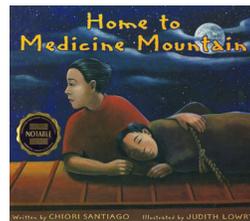
Ira's Shakespeare Dream • written by Glenda Armand, illustrated by Floyd Cooper • A biography chronicling the life of Ira Aldridge, an African American performer who is considered to be one of the greatest Shakespearean actors of the nineteenth century. • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/ira-s-shakespeare-dream>



Frederick Douglass: The Last Day of Slavery • written by William Miller, illustrated by Cedric Lucas • Young Frederick Douglass dreams of escape, so an overseer sets out to "break" him. Frederick's response to the overseer's brutality is an act of courage that frees forever what no person can hold captive: his spirit. • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/frederick-douglass>

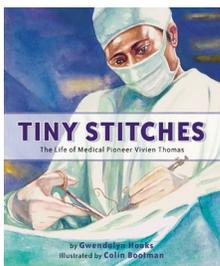


Step Up to the Plate, Maria Singh • written by Uma Krishnaswami • While her parents and neighbors are struggling through World War II, working for India's independence, and trying to stay on their farmland, nine-year-old Maria Singh learns to play softball just like her heroes in the All-American Girls' League. • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/step-up-to-the-plate-maria-singh>

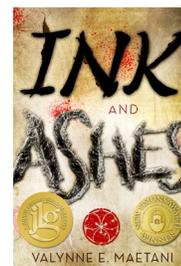


Home to Medicine Mountain • written by Chiori Santiago, illustrated by Judith Lowry • Two young Maidu Indian brothers, sent to live at a government-run Indian residential school in California in the 1930s, find a way to escape and return home for the summer. • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/home-to-medicine-mountain>

grades 6-8



Tiny Stitches: The Life of Medical Pioneer Vivien Thomas • written by Gwendolyn Hooks, illustrated by Colin Bootman • The life story of Vivien Thomas, an African American surgical technician who developed the first procedure used to perform open-heart surgery on children. • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/tiny-stitches>

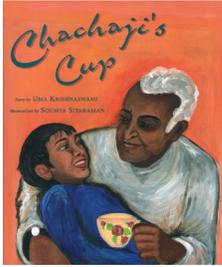


Ink and Ashes • written by Valynne E. Maetani • When Claire Takata finds out that her deceased father was once a member of the yakuza — a Japanese crime syndicate — the secret threatens her friends and family, her newfound love, and even Claire's own life. • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/ink-and-ashes>

perspective-taking

teaching students about seeing a situation from another person's point of view

grades preK-2



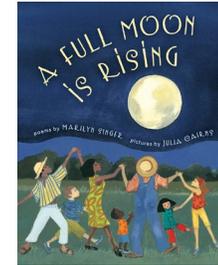
Chachaji's Cup • written by Uma Krishnaswami, illustrated by Soumya Sitaraman • Neel's great-uncle Chachaji lives with the family, and from his stories of the past, Neel comes to understand and value the history of his family, his roots in India, and his cultural traditions and heritage. • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/chachaji-s-cup>



Mamá the Alien/Mamá la extraterrestre • written by René Colato Lainez, illustrated by Laura Lacámara • A young girl sees the word "alien" on her mother's Resident Alien card and worries her mother is from another planet, until she finds out that the word has more than one meaning. (Bilingual English/Spanish.) • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/mama-the-alien-mama-la-extraterrestre>

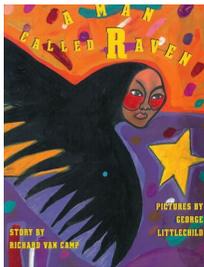


Sparkle Boy • written by Lesléa Newman, illustrated by Maria Mola • Young Casey loves sparkly things, but his older sister Jessie does not approve of his interest until an encounter with bullies helps her learn to accept and respect Casey for who he is. • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/sparkle-boy>

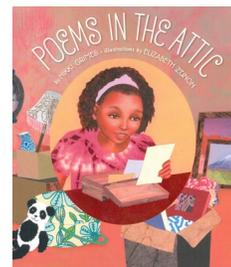


A Full Moon is Rising • written by Marilyn Singer, illustrated by Julia Cairns • A collection of original poems about full moon events, phenomena, celebrations, and beliefs from around the world. • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/a-full-moon-is-rising>

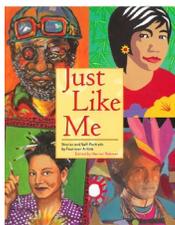
grades 3-5



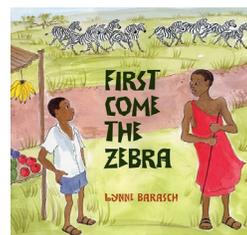
A Man Called Raven • written by Richard Van Camp, illustrated by George Littlechild • Set in the Northwest Territories of Canada, Van Camp's contemporary Native story draws from the animal legends and folklore told to him by his Dogrib elders. Littlechild's bold use of color and perspective captures the sense of mystery and magic surrounding a strange raven man who teaches two boys the meaning of respect for nature. • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/a-man-called-raven>



Poems in the Attic • written by Nikki Grimes, illustrated by Elizabeth Zunon • A young girl becomes closer to her mother after discovering a box of poems her mother wrote about her experiences growing up as the child of an Air Force serviceman and living around the world. Told in alternating free verse and tanka (similar to haiku) poems in different perspectives. • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/poems-in-the-attic>



Just Like Me • edited by Harriet Rohmer, illustrated by Fourteen Artists • Through stories, paintings, and childhood photographs, these fourteen artists open their hearts and invite us to enter their worlds. • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/just-like-me>

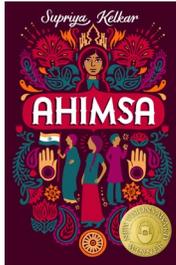


First Come the Zebra • written and illustrated by Lynne Barasch • Two young Kenyan boys, one Maasai and one Kikuyu, find a way to overcome their traditional rivalries and become friends. • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/first-come-the-zebra>

perspective-taking

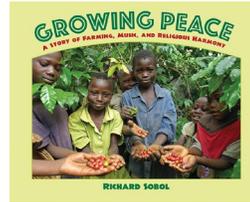
teaching students about seeing a situation from another person's point of view

grades 6-8



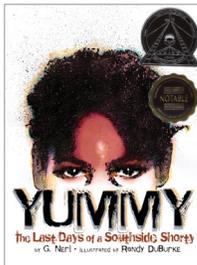
Ahimsa • written by Supriya Kelkar

• In this historical novel, Gandhi asks for one member of each family to join the fight for independence from the British, and when Anjali's mother is jailed for doing so, Anjali must step out of her comfort zone to take over her mother's work. • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/ahimsa>



Growing Peace: A Story of Farming, Music, and Religious Harmony

• written and photographed by Richard Sobol • This photo-essay focuses on Jewish, Muslim, and Christian families in a Ugandan village who learned to live and work together peacefully as the result of a Fair Trade farming cooperative organized by local farmer and musician J.J. Keki. • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/growing-peace>



Yummy: The Last Days of a Southside Shorty • written by G. Neri, illustrated by Randy DuBurke •

This graphic novel is based on the true story of Robert "Yummy" Sandifer, an eleven-year-old boy from Chicago's South Side who was killed by his own gang members. • <https://www.leeandlow.com/books/yummy>

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Social and Emotional Learning FOR THE CLASSROOM

- * **CASEL's Five SEL Competencies**
<https://www.centerforresilientchildren.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/CASEL-5-SEL-Competencies.pdf>
- * **Angela Duckworth's Character Lab**
<http://www.gettingsmart.com/2016/10/sel-organizations-making-a-difference/>
- * **13 Powerful SEL Activities from Edutopia**
<https://www.edutopia.org/article/13-powerful-sel-activities-emelina-minero>
- * **Kindness: A Lesson Plan from Edutopia**
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