



September 2020

It takes a Neighborhood to Nourish a Children's Librarian

Hello neighbors!

We have made it another month. Katherine did a question on our Instagram (make sure you're following us @thecardigannewsletter) about how you all are doing. 39% of you said that you're doing okay, **but 61% of you said that you are struggling.** Friends, we hear you! I'd be lying if I didn't say I, too, am struggling to adapt to all the changes our specific library and our profession are making in regards to COVID-19. To address some of these struggles, we have a very special guest, Sarah, who is writing about ambiguous loss.

We know many of you have been the pioneers of activity bags/take home kits. Katherine has started a Google Drive folder to keep all of these great ideas so we can all learn from each other. Check out more information about take home kits in the Play section. I'm also particularly excited about this month's author, Thom Pico. Pico comes to us from France and with him the most delightful graphic novel, *Aster and the Accidental Magic*. I can't wait for everyone to finish this graphic novel and share it with all their young graphic novel enthusiasts.

I wish we could do more for your struggles. We are thinking about you. As always, email us your ideas, concerns, and anything you would like us to cover in the newsletter or on Instagram (@thecardigannewsletter).

Stay safe,

Allie

Learn

Ambiguous Loss

Deepen your knowledge on a topic related to Children's Services.

Sarah Davis

You know how it happened. A flurry of new information about a new pandemic disease: memes about flattening the curve, Tom Hanks's announcement of his COVID-19 diagnosis, the NBA and other sports cancellations and then, well, everything changed. In the span of a few weeks, then a few quick days, life as we knew it in the United States ceased to exist. Events were cancelled, most stayed home and everything was uncertain.

As 2020 continues, the losses pile higher in these pandemic times. Many people have died while others have endured terrible illness yet survived. Many have lost jobs, livelihoods and dreams. Collectively, we are all experiencing trauma. Even if you don't know anyone who has died, even if you still have your job, even if you haven't gotten sick, everyone has lost *something*. Some of these losses are difficult to define and challenging to face.

Enter: ambiguous loss.

What is ambiguous loss? This term, developed by Dr. Pauline Boss, is **defined by a loss that lacks "closure or clear understanding"** (Wikipedia: Ambiguous Loss). It is grief without resolution.

Traditionally, this kind of loss has been explored in families and individuals whose loved ones have disappeared physically or who are missing psychologically (for example, a relative with dementia). Yet even before this pandemic, ambiguous loss could be applied to many other uncertain losses. Now, though, ambiguous loss and the dreadful uncertainty that accompanies it has hit global proportions.

As children's librarians and library workers who serve children and families, we are experiencing our own significant and ambiguous losses. Most of us have done our best work (and perhaps defined our own selves) with our in-person public service through storytimes and other programs, readers' advisory and even relationships with our young attendees and their families. We have been able to translate some of these programs virtually, and while it is wonderful to still be able to connect, we all know it isn't quite the same. **Some of us may have lost responsibilities or opportunities that once were essential to our jobs. These examples, and more, are ambiguous losses: We don't know if or when these duties and dreams will be restored.**

We have these ambiguous losses, so now what? For specific advice, please seek the guidance of a qualified mental health professional. There are no easy answers for how we cope with this confusing kind of grief. One place to start is acknowledging and naming these losses. We should name this grief and sorrow; we don't have to push through and say we're fine when we're absolutely not fine. Whatever our losses, we must be kind to ourselves and others as we make our way through these pandemic times.

Some questions and resources to consider:

- *What have you lost in this pandemic?*
- *What have you gained or how have you changed in 2020?*

Journal about these questions, share with a friend or close colleague and find a qualified therapist when you need more support.

Resources

[Interview of Dr. Pauline Boss by Krista Tippett on On Being in 2016](#)

[Interview of Dr. Pauline Boss on "Living the Questions" by Krista Tippett on On Being on July 17, 2020](#)

[Ambiguous Loss: Learning to Live with Unresolved Grief by Dr. Pauline Boss](#)

[Ambiguous Loss website](#)

[Ambiguous Loss entry on Wikipedia](#)

By Sarah Davis, Youth Librarian, Herman and Kate Kaiser Library, part of the Tulsa City-County Library system

Play

Activity Bag Ideas

Katherine

Need more inspo for your craft bags? I am hoping we can crowdsource all of our to-go craft ideas in one place. Please feel free to upload any pictures or documents of your own kits to share with other readers in [this folder](#). Please follow this naming convention: **NameOfCraft (Your Name)**. You may need a gmail account to upload files; if you don't have one you can email me at thecardigannewsletter@gmail.com and I can upload it for you.

Plan

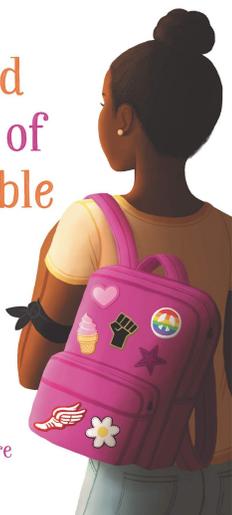
A Good Kind of Trouble Discussion Guide

Allie

A Good Kind of Trouble

"Full of heart and truth."
—ANGIE THOMAS,
#1 New York Times
bestselling author of
The Hate U Give

Lisa Moore
Ramée



I have appreciated the booklists upon booklists that have been shared about anti-racist literature, especially those for youth. I wanted to encourage my fellow book club planners to be thinking about including some of these books to select for their book clubs or book-talking these titles with their students.

This next month, my middle grade book club is reading *A Good Kind of Trouble* by Lisa Moore Ramee. I can't stress enough how great this book is for starting age-appropriate conversations on what is happening in our country. I wanted to share with you all a [discussion guide and activities](#) that I created for our book club and our area teachers. As we move to "virtual" programming and our schools also move to hybrid or online courses, librarians and teachers have to get creative. I included how each of the questions and activities relates to our state's education standards. While we are planning these virtual programs, I think it is nice to consider how a teacher can use or replicate it for their virtual classroom and share it with them.

What books are your book clubs reading? What virtual activities have you included? How are you connecting with your area teachers during this time? We would love to hear from you. Email us at thecardigannewsletter@gmail.com or message us on our Instagram (@thecardigannewsletter).

Consider

Neutrality

Libraries are for everyone!

Allie

Are libraries neutral? Can libraries be neutral? This is not a new debate and it continues to be one we all need to consider for the future of our profession. [ALA's Midwinter 2018's President's Program](#) featured a debate about the definition of neutrality and its place in the library. Those who argued for neutrality pointed out that libraries are "content-neutral," and in our very Bill of Rights it states, "a person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views." By policy we are not supposed to give preferential treatment to those who agree with us or discriminate against those who don't.

However, others argued that the very nature of the institution of the library makes the library not neutral. "The very notion that shared, consolidated community resources ought to exist is not a neutral proposition. A library as an institution represents a decision about how a community spends its resources, and those decisions are not neutral" ([ALA's Midwinter 2018's President's Program Full Remarks](#)). Another panelist pointed out that the fact that our profession is primarily white is not an accident and only proves how "not neutral" libraries are, and have always been.

Hack Library School also had an interesting article about the reasons why libraries should take sides. The author points out that every decision made about the collection, staffing needs, and strategic planning involves people taking sides informed by experience, bias, and thoughtful research. The author writes, "You'd be hard pressed to find any decision a person can make that is not political in some way...To ignore this truth robs us of the shared experience of facing persistent injustice and navigating the complexity of making morally sound decisions for ourselves and for the people we serve" ([Libraries Should Take Sides: Breaking Down the Neutrality Myth](#)).

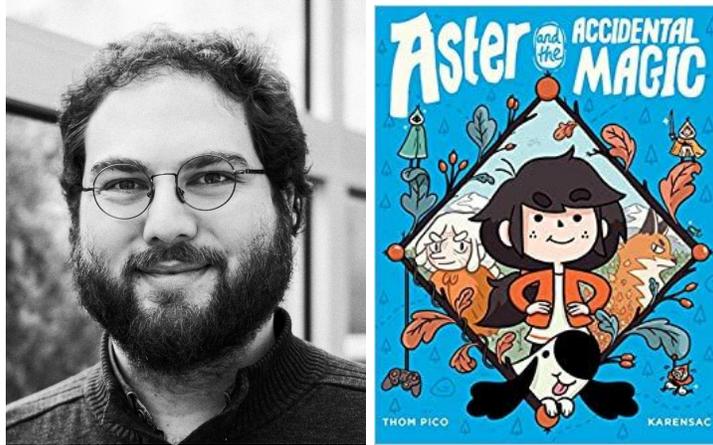
I also think of Banned Books week and all the books we highlight that people say, "Remove," yet we keep. We can't say we include everything and that is what makes us neutral when this means we are deliberately taking the side of those who want to include it and not the side of the one who says, "remove."

I don't have the right answer. This is after-all the "Consider" section. I only want us to consider while the library claims neutrality, are we neutral? Can we be neutral? And if we can, should we be neutral?

Connect

Thom Pico

Allie



1. Tell us about your graphic novel *Aster and the Accidental Magic* and the inspiration for the book.

Aster is a young city dweller who moves with her family to the mountains, much to her discontent! Pushed to explore, she discovered an environment rich in magic and mysteries. Accompanied by her chatty dog Buzz, Aster soon finds herself having to save her new home by facing an invasion of giant birds, a Trickster Rapsallion, a bad-tempered fox and overall the imbalance of natural forces. Aster can be impulsive, stubborn, and make many mistakes, but learns from them and grows through stories, and as time passes through the seasons. She learns to trust new friends and how to show and how to focus on dialogue rather than fighting.

Originally, Aster was created by my friend Karensac. She called me in to help her write the first story, and as I made these characters and this universe my own, I shared the authorship with her. Our greatest inspiration comes from American cartoons which for several years have been shaking up the landscape of youth stories. Adventure Time, Steven Universe, Gravity Falls (and all the other ones), are at the same time incredibly fun, crazy, with a worked background and an important message. This is what we wanted for Aster, so the writing came naturally. As we both grew up in the countryside, we wanted to rediscover in our story this sense of wonder toward nature, and to achieve that we made this poor Aster follow the opposite path.

2. What are some books that have had an impact on your life/writing?

I read a lot of different things, so this is not an easy question! But if I had to remember just one work, it would be Terry Pratchett's *Discworld* changed my view of literature, masterfully combining an hilarious form and a background stuffed with important social reflections. I do not know of an author who has achieved such a feat through a work of such diversity

I'm also a huge fan of Jeff Smith's *Bone*. I am sure that despite my best efforts, his influence is still felt in my work today!

Finally, I would quote *Fortunately, the Milk*, by Neil Gaiman: in addition to being an incredibly funny little story, it was while reading it that I realized that we could afford absolutely anything in youth writing. I was at that time trying to find an ending for the third act of Aster's first story, and it was this book that made me say to myself, "kids can handle it, let's have fun and destroy the universe! "

3. How can our readers connect with you?

There's no lack of choices! If you want to drop us a line, Karensac and I are on Instagram and twitter (@thompico & @mlekarensac on both social networks).

We are so proud that our little Aster crossed the Atlantic, so please let us know if you liked her adventures!

Read

Children of All Abilities

Some of our favorite books.

Katherine

Click on the image to be redirected to the list



Reflect

The History of Libraries

Where we reflect on the deeper questions.

Katherine

In her article called "[Vocational Awe and Librarianship: The Lies We Tell Ourselves](#)," librarian Fobazi Ettarh argues that many librarians and professional leadership organizations believe in the

inherent goodness and sacredness of the profession. This belief clouds their ability to recognize problems, and acknowledge historical complicity in oppression. It is important for librarians to learn about the history of the institution: this is one of the ways we will be able to recognize structural oppression today. Librarian nina de jesus wrote [an excellent article](#) for Librarian With the Lead Pipe in 2014 naming the very biased, paternalistic history of libraries.

It becomes clear that the primary purpose of libraries wasn't education (...) but was political. Education within this ideological statement is only a means to an end: creating better citizens. In this instance 'better' equals 'better educated.' Almost nothing in this statement about the purpose of libraries is value-neutral and apolitical. And it would be difficult to unpack everything that is oppressive about this motivation to create libraries.

*In a context like this, many of the current real-world examples about how libraries are 'failing' marginalized people become clearly not a 'failure' but intentional. **Public libraries in America and Canada were not designed for everyone; they are, as Bivens-Tatum says, intended for citizens.** And their purpose is to create better citizens. This is not a politically neutral purpose.*

This is a fascinating and incisive perspective on the purpose of libraries. By seeking to make the library more accessible, more representative of its community, more user-centered, we are going against the very historical purpose of the library. Librarianship was developed as a profession to create experts in others' needs and pursuit of "good citizenship." This is why conversations about neutrality, as Allie described above, seem to be facing a dead end. While there are many wonderful thinkers seeking to challenge this thinking, it is baked into every level of the library institution. It requires active de-centering and consistently asking our community members what they need from us, instead of assuming. It also requires challenging whatever utopian vision of the library we may have. Public libraries in the United States were largely created to shape people into the kind of citizens we thought they should be.

Share

Engaging Your Audience

Theresa Rodriguez

After recently rereading Donalyn Miller's book *The Book Whisperer* and attending a training by Rhonda Richardson from Richardson Educator Consulting Services, I began thinking about what I could change in how I share stories with children. One way a book makes a good read aloud for me is if there is repetition in the story. If there is a phrase or line in the story that is repeated, I invite the children (and parents) to help me out and read that part. What both Donalyn Miller and Rhonda Richardson got me excited to do was think of others ways to get children involved in the stories I read aloud.

Here are a few ways I came up with:

- Allowing children to make predictions - What do you think is going to happen? What do you think the character is going to do?
- Asking if they know what a certain word means? Sharing the meaning of the word.
- Asking the children to share what they see on the pages. Sharing what I see.
- Asking about the characters' facial expressions - Do they look mad? Or sad? Or Scared?
- Asking what they see on the end pages. Talking about the illustrations on the end pages.

- Asking about their favorite part of the story. Taking a pause and allowing time for a few children to answer (small group). Encouraging them to talk to a friend/sibling/parent about their favorite part of the story (large group). Sharing my favorite part of the story.

Using these ideas will allow me to model to children (and their caregivers) habits that the children can use when becoming readers.

Follow up about REALM project

IMLS, OCLC, and Batelle released [their latest results](#), specifically about plastic. They found that the coronavirus can live up to **5 days** on hard and soft plastics found on DVD cases, plastic bags, plexiglass, and audio materials. *"Compared to the results of Test 1 and 2, this data suggests that a slightly longer quarantine time for these types of plastic-based materials may be required to render SARS-CoV-2 undetectable through natural attenuation alone."*

You can [sign up to receive project updates](#) to get the most up-to-date information about their research.

Logo by Thomas Freeman