

"Assisted" Narrative Picture Book

Like many traditional narratives, the “assisted” narrative has a character or characters facing a challenge—often internal—and changing as a result. They have feelings and/or reactions to a situation and undergo a change in perspective, self-awareness, etc by the end of the story, usually with the help of a wise and loving adult. This is different from many traditional stories where the protagonist usually solves their problem themselves.

Examples:

Watercress by Andrea Wang, illustrated by Justin Chan.

“Driving through Ohio in an old Pontiac, a young girl's parents stop suddenly when they spot watercress growing wild in a ditch by the side of the road. Grabbing an old paper bag and some rusty scissors, the whole family wades into the muck to collect as much of the muddy, snail covered watercress as they can. At first, she's embarrassed. Why can't her family get food from the grocery store? But when her mother shares a story of her family's time in China, the girl learns to appreciate the fresh food they foraged. Together, they make a new memory of watercress.”

A Different Pond by Bao Phi, illustrated by Thi Bui.

“...a powerful, honest glimpse into a relationship between father and son - and between cultures, old and new. As a young boy, Bao and his father awoke early, hours before his father's long workday began, to fish on the shores of a small pond in Minneapolis. Unlike many other anglers, Bao and his father fished for food, not recreation. A successful catch meant a fed family. Between hope-filled casts, Bao's father told him about a different pond in their homeland of Vietnam.”

Your Name Is A Song by Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow, illustrated by Luisa Uribe.

“Frustrated by a day full of teachers and classmates mispronouncing her beautiful name, a little girl tells her mother she never wants to come back to school. In response, the girl's mother teaches her about the musicality of African, Asian, Black-American, Latinx, and Middle Eastern names on their lyrical walk home through the city. Empowered by this newfound understanding, the young girl is ready to return the next day to share her knowledge with her class. *Your Name is a Song* is a celebration to remind all of us about the beauty, history, and magic behind names.”

Planning the “Assisted” Narrative Picture Book

Who are your characters? What are their relationships to each other?
What is the premise, experience(s) or problem(s) explored in the story? You can touch on theme if that helps you. (wonder, imagination, loneliness, belonging, differences, death, change, etc)
What events or situations occur in the story that support/demonstrate the premise/experience(s)/problem(s)?
How do the character(s) change or grow/what do they learn by the end of the story?
What feeling or emotion might readers be left with at the end?