

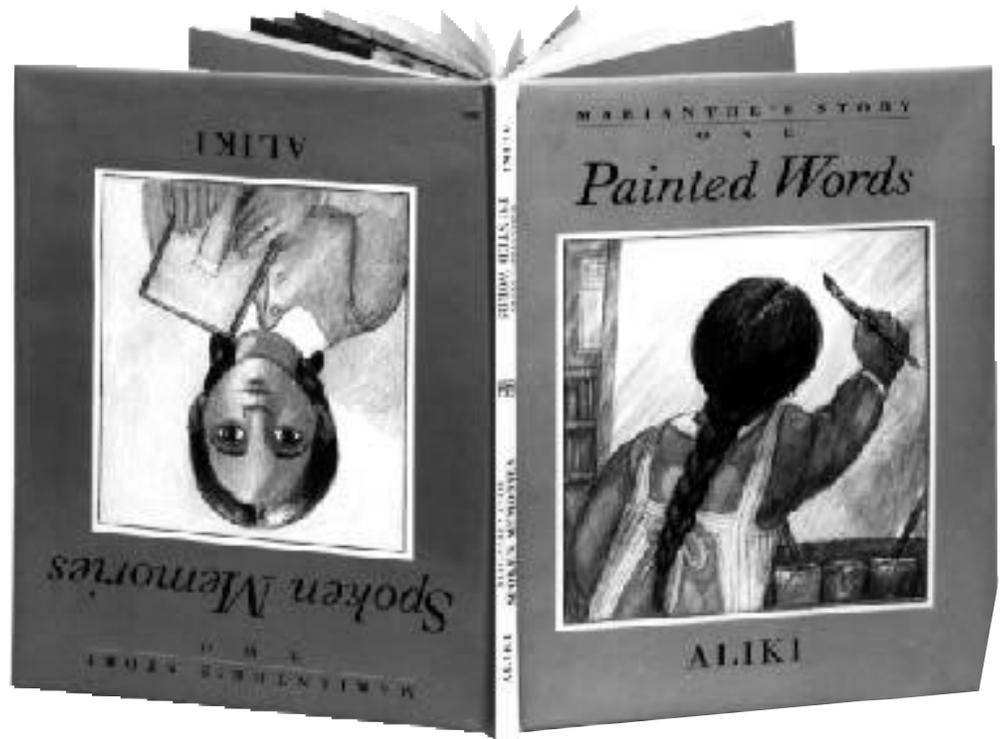
Aliki

STUDY GUIDE

MARIANTHE'S STORY

ONE
Painted Words

TWO
Spoken Memories



Marianthe's Story: Painted Words

Marianthe's Story: Spoken Memories

The first day at a new school is never easy, even if you've just moved across town. Imagine what the first day is like if you are an immigrant from another country. Imagine what the first day is like if you speak no English, not a word. Imagine what the first day is like if you don't wear your hair the way other kids do, or dress like them.

That's what happens to Marianthe in *Painted Words*. She is a brand new immigrant who must find the courage and the wisdom to wait patiently to become accustomed to life in America. And as Marianthe waits, she discovers she can communicate with her classmates after all: through the marvelous pictures she paints to describe what she sees and feels.

Flip the book over. This is the second part of *Marianthe's Story*, *Spoken Memories*. Time has passed, and the immigrant girl now has words at her command with which to tell her classmates about her life in the country she came from. She can tell, in words, why her parents decided to move away from everything they knew to begin a better life in a new land.

Marianthe's Story is a two-part picture book created by one of the most beloved of all author-illustrators for children, Aliki, a woman much honored for her ability to express the most intense childhood feelings with vividness and truth.





SIDEBAR IDEAS:

- Look at other books about family and the immigrant experience. Compare them with *Marianthe's Story*. Here are a few examples to get started; your school librarian can recommend others:
 - SEVEN BRAVE WOMEN* by Betsy Hearne, illustrated by Bethanne Andersen (Greenwillow, 1997)
 - IF YOUR NAME WAS CHANGED AT ELLIS ISLAND* by Ellen Levine, illustrated by Wayne Parmenter (Scholastic, 1993)
 - THE KEEPING QUILT* by Patricia Polacco (Simon & Schuster, 1988)
 - GRANDFATHER'S JOURNEY* by Allen Say (Houghton Mifflin, 1991)
- Try role playing with the students. Scenarios can include Marianthe talking with her mother about school experiences, Marianthe and her family saying good-bye to relatives and friends before leaving for America, and Mr. Petrie working with students on their "Writers Galore" projects.
- Brainstorm together to create a list of highlights of the school year (to date) and let the class work together to design and create a mural that depicts them.

MEET THE BOOK

- Before reading the book, talk about some of the ways people record—or share—their experiences and feelings. Children might mention keeping a diary, drawing a picture, or talking with their parents.
- Read the title and identify Aliki as the author-illustrator. Do the children know any other books by this particular author? List any titles on a piece of poster paper and bring it along the next time the students visit the library.
- Look together at the cover illustrations. Do the pictures reveal anything about the book's contents?

READ THE BOOK

- Read both parts of *Marianthe's Story* in one session.
- After reading, invite the children to share their responses. Several themes will undoubtedly emerge from the conversation, and you may wish to summarize them on the board or a piece of poster paper. Here are some ideas you might talk about:
 - How it feels to be an outsider
 - How it feels to be in a new situation
 - How it feels to have difficulty communicating
 - How it feels to have a special talent
 - How it feels to make a friend
 - How it feels to have a terrific teacher
- Review the unique format. Demonstrate again how the book flips over for the reader to begin the second story. Are there other books that also use this technique? —Tana Hoban's *26 Letters and 99 Cents* (Greenwillow) is one.

TIPS FOR READING ALOUD:

- First, read the book yourself. Take time to think about what the story means to you, and what it might mean to your students.
- Incorporate those ideas when you read aloud, and share the story with expression and enthusiasm.
- Pause when finishing *Painted Words* and point out how the author-illustrator wrote two separate and distinct stories to make one book about Marianthe.

EXTEND THE BOOK

- Create a single time line that combines both stories, and ask the children to reconstruct the order in which the events happened. Talk about what parts of the story took place in the past and what parts happen in the present. Speculate together about Marianthe's future. What might happen to her in the next week, month, or year?
- Make a list of the items Marianthe might bring to start her new life. Make a suitcase or trunk from a cardboard box and "pack it." Children can draw pictures of the items, create the items out of craft materials, or contribute actual items they find at home or in the classroom.
- Marianthe knows that a picture can communicate just as effectively as words, sometimes more so. Gather together some appropriate art reproductions, illustrations, or photographs and share them with the class. Can the children write about or tell stories based on what they see? Talk about how long the stories they create have to be to have the same effect as the image.
- In her letter, Aliko says that she based Marianthe's home village on the place her mother lived as a child —Sparta, in Greece. Check out any available materials at the library about Sparta and Greece. Look particularly for examples of the Greek alphabet so students can see for themselves the letters Marianthe first learned to write. Ask around to find a person who speaks Greek and ask if he or she can visit the classroom and share the language with the children. Perhaps he or she can also describe life in his or her hometown.

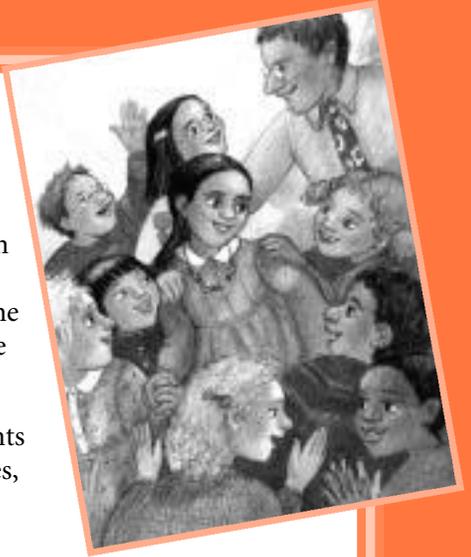


THINGS TO THINK ABOUT AND TALK ABOUT

- *Painted Words* depicts Marianthe's first experiences at her new school. At the beginning she feels like an outsider, but slowly these feelings begin to change. Ask the children to think about times when they felt like outsiders in a group. Talk about the experience. What were they like? How did they feel? What or who helped them during this time? Or did it just take time to feel comfortable?
- Aliko's book demonstrates that humans can communicate in a variety of ways. Play a game of picture charades with the children. Instead of pantomiming, draw pictures. Divide the children into two teams. Give each team a word or phrase to draw. Take turns guessing what each team is trying to convey. Then, try the same game but substitute pantomiming for the picture-making. Talk with the children about which game was easier or harder to play.
- Marianthe's mother uses many special phrases to comfort her daughter during this stressful time of transition. Talk with the children about the phrases their parents, relatives, or teachers might say to help them feel better about things. Some examples might be: "Look on the bright side," "Don't let the bad guys get you down," "This too shall pass," "Tomorrow will be better."

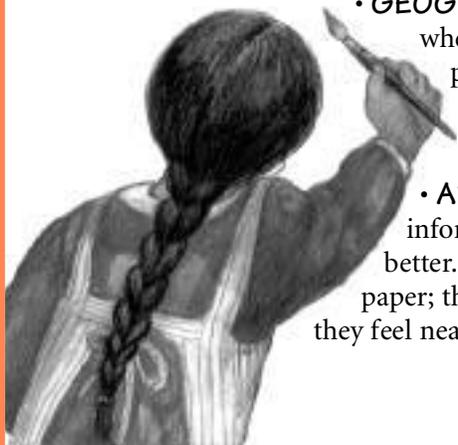
THINGS TO WRITE ABOUT

- Invite children to share their family stories about immigration. Has anyone in their immediate families recently emigrated to the United States? How about an older relative or friend? Have the children interview the immigrant and present their conversation in a question-and-answer format. Put all the interviews together in a book and ask the public librarian to display it so members of the community can browse through it.
- We live in an extremely mobile society. Chances are, most of the students have moved at least once. Invite children to share their own experiences, and then, as a class, create a “newcomer’s guide” to your school and community. What information do all people need? What information would kids specifically want to know?
- Invite children to write the kind of note to Marianne that they might pass in class to a friend, focusing specifically on what they would say after Marianne creates the painting of the crying girl.
- Create a class memory book entitled “Starting School.” Ask the children to write about a memorable incident from a particular first day at school and then draw an accompanying picture. The stories and pictures can be divided into themes labeled “Chapters,” chapter openers can be labeled and drawn and the book can be displayed for everyone in the library.



MAKE CONNECTIONS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

- **SOCIAL STUDIES:** Many immigrants who came to this country at the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth did so through New York’s Ellis Island, sailing under the shadow of the Statue of Liberty. Learn all you can about the importance of these two places to the history of our country in general and specifically to the history of immigration.
- **MATH AND COMPUTER** What makes a community? Life in the village Marianne comes from seems very different from ours. People seem more connected, neighbors more interdependent. Who are some of the people in the children’s community who matter to them? What are some of the places that are important? Children might mention family members, special neighbors, babysitters, teachers, coaches, and clergy. Ask them to rank their responses in order of most important to least important. Tally, create categories, and chart the results on pie charts and bar graphs.
- **GEOGRAPHY:** Take a world map and pinpoint all the countries where students have ancestors. Make an alphabetical list of the places and post it next to the map. Place beside the map a pie chart showing the percentage of migration from the various continents.
- **ART:** Students can create an “All About Me” poster, filled with information that helps classmates know and understand each other better. Ask students to draw a life-size version of themselves on poster paper; they could write about things they think near their heads, things they feel near their hearts, games they like to play near their feet, and so on.



ALIKI



Photo: Neil Landman

Dear Friend of Books,

Another book from the heart from me. This time from the heart of my feelings for teachers, librarians, and family. *Marianthe's Story* is two books in one. Book One—*Painted Words*—is the story of Marianthe, who enters school not knowing the language. It happens to more and more people these days. It happened to me and to many of my friends, and Mari is a mixture of all of us. She communicates through pictures she paints. My own kindergarten teacher one day asked my parents to go see what I had painted. “She’ll be an artist someday,” she said.

The idea for this book was born after a visit to Columbus (Ohio) Metropolitan Library, where I told one librarian, Kristin Shelley, my story, and she told me about her Russian friend. Mr. Petrie is a composite of three great teachers: Debe Petrey from Newark, OH (who changed gender — funny what happens when you write about “true” subjects); Tim Hamilton from Nashville, TN; and Mr. Slinger, the fabulous teacher who appears in Kevin Henkes’s picture book, *Lilly’s Purple Plastic Purse*.

I had to write Book Two—*Spoken Memories*—to find out where Mari comes from: Vietnam? Bosnia? In her new language, Mari tells her class about life in her poor village and her family’s eventual emigration to the land where they “might find a better life.” The village is based on my mother’s in Sparta, though I hope others will think it is theirs.

The characters are composites of friends, relatives, my mother, and my grandmother—who cared about education with a passion. They are her words that Mari’s mother speaks to the critical villagers. When they emigrated, my mother was six. My grandfather was well-educated, but my grandmother learned to read and write at 54, in a school she founded for women like herself.

I wanted these stories to be read together, with the classroom experience first. A reminder of how afraid and critical people can be until enlightened. So here it is, *Marianthe's Story*, from my heart to yours. And with it, this unique chance to thank you for all you do for children.



With love, Alike

About the Contributor: Jane Claes has been a school librarian for six years in the Irving (Texas) Independent School District. She holds a Master's degree in Library Science from Texas Woman's University School of Library and Information Studies, where she is currently a doctoral student.

SOME FAVORITE BOOKS BY ALIKI

MARIANTHE'S STORY

PAINTED WORDS/SPOKEN MEMORIES
TR 0-688-15661-4 \$16.00 (Can.\$22.00)
LE 0-688-15662-2 \$15.93 (Can. \$21.93)

AT MARY BLOOM'S

LE 0-688-02481-5 \$15.93 (Can. \$21.90)

BEST FRIENDS TOGETHER AGAIN

TR 0-688-13753-9 \$15.00 (Can. \$20.50)
LE 0-688-13754-7 \$14.93 (Can.\$20.41)

COMMUNICATION

TR 0-688-10529-7 \$14.00 (Can.\$19.00)
LE 0-688-11248-X \$13.93 (Can. \$18.90)

FEELINGS

TR 0-688-03831-X \$16.00 (Can.\$22.00)
LE 0-688-03832-8 \$15.93 (Can.\$21.90)
PA 0-688-06518-X \$4.95 (Can.\$6.75)

HELLO! GOOD-BYE!

TR 0-688-14333-4 \$15.00 (Can.\$20.50)
LE 0-688-14334-2 \$14.93 (Can. \$20.41)

JACK AND JAKE

TR 0-688-06099-4 \$12.95 (Can.\$17.50)

MANNERS

TR 0-688-09198-9 \$16.00 (Can. \$22.00)
LE 0-688-09199-7 \$15.93 (Can.\$21.90)
PA 0-688-04579-0 \$4.95 (Can. \$6.75)

OVERNIGHT AT MARY BLOOM'S

LE 0-688-06765-4 \$15.93 (Can.\$20.41)

THE TWO OF THEM

PA 0-688-07337-9 \$4.95 (Can.\$6.75)

WELCOME, LITTLE BABY

TR 0-688-06810-3 \$16.00 (Can. \$22.00)
(Mini)0-688-12665-0 \$4.95 (Can. \$6.75)

WE ARE BEST FRIENDS

TR 0-688-00822-4 \$16.00 (Can.\$22.00)
LE 0-688-00823-2 \$15.93 (Can.\$21.90)
PA 0-688-07037-X \$4.95 (Can. \$6.75)

... AND IN YOUR LIBRARY

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY ALIKI

THE TWELVE MONTHS
USE YOUR HEAD, DEAR

ILLUSTRATED BY ALIKI AND WRITTEN BY FRANZ BRANDENBERG

AUNT NINA AND
HER NEPHEWS AND NIECES
AUNT NINA, GOOD NIGHT
AUNT NINA'S VISIT
COCK-A-DOODLE-DOO
EVERYONE READY?
I WISH I WAS SICK, TOO!

IT'S NOT MY FAULT
LEO AND EMILY
LEO AND EMILY AND THE DRAGON
LEO AND EMILY'S BIG IDEAS
NICE NEW NEIGHBORS
SIX NEW STUDENTS

*We encourage you to order books from your local bookseller or wholesaler.
If you are unable to do this, please call our customer service department at
1-800-237-0657 for order information.*

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