



Story Summary

It is still dark in Kabul, Afghanistan when the library bus rumbles out of the city. There are no bus seats—instead there are chairs and tables and shelves of books. And there are no passengers—instead there is Pari, who is nervously starting her first day as Mama’s library helper. Pari stands tall to hand out notebooks and pencils at the

villages and the refugee camp, but she feels intimidated. The girls they visit are learning to write English from Mama. Pari can’t even read or write in Farsi yet. But next year she will go to school and learn all there is to know. And she is so lucky. Not long ago, Mama tells her, girls were not allowed to read at all.

Illustrated Book Ages 5–8 | ISBN: 978-1-77278-101-4 | Pages: 32

THEMES

Community, Helping, Alphabets, Diversity, Refugees, Global citizenship, World literacy

BISAC CODES

JUV047000 JUVENILE FICTION / Books & Libraries
JUV030110 JUVENILE FICTION / People & Places / Middle East
JUV074000 JUVENILE FICTION / Diversity & Multicultural

READING LEVEL

Lexile Measure: AD560L | Fountas & Pinnell: M

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Social Studies—roles & responsibilities, world communities, global citizenship
Reading—alphabets
Art—art in diverse communities

Bahram Rahman, illus. Gabrielle Grimard
The Library Bus

Bahram Rahman was born in Kabul, Afghanistan, and grew up during the civil war and the Taliban regime. He earned a medical degree at Kabul Medical University and a master’s degree in public policy at the University of Erfurt, Germany, while also working as an activist in Afghanistan in the areas of gender equality and youth political participation. Bahram came to Canada as a refugee in 2012, and today he is a senior policy advisor at the Ministry of Health in Ontario. He wrote *The Library Bus*, his first picture book, to document the struggle for education experienced by the women in his own family and to draw attention to the barriers that still exist for millions of children, especially girls, living in war torn countries today.

Gabrielle Grimard transformed her love of design into a career in illustration over the course of her studies at Concordia University and the University of Quebec. In 2018, Gabrielle’s picture book *Stolen Words* won the Ruth and Sylvia Schwartz Children’s Book Award and was a finalist for the TD Canadian Children’s Book Award. *Not My Girl* was a USBBY Outstanding International Book. Her creativity has been applied to children’s publishing, advertising, and educational contexts.

Links:

Omniglot, the Online Encyclopedia of Writing Systems & Languages—Persian (Farsi):

<https://omniglot.com/writing/persian.htm>

United Nations—World Food Programme:

<https://www.wfp.org/>

UNHCR—The UN Refugee Agency:

<https://www.unhcr.org/>

Pair this book with:

In a Cloud of Dust by Alma Fullerton, illus. Brian Deines

My Beautiful Birds by Suzanne Del Rizzo

THIS GUIDE CONTAINS:

This guide contains activities for each grade in the primary divisions and a junior grade activity. These activities are labeled with the grade for which they are likely most suited, but teachers will be able to adapt many of the activities for their own grade.

GRADE LEVEL	MAIN SUBJECT AREA	ACTIVITY/TOPIC
Junior Kindergarten	The Community	All Kinds of Buses
Senior Kindergarten	Reading	All Kinds of Alphabets
Grade 1	Social Studies	Changing Roles and Responsibilities
Grade 2	Social Studies	Communities Around the World
Grade 3	Art	Art in Diverse Communities
Grade 4–6	Social Studies	Global Citizenship

ACTIVITY 1: JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN—ALL KINDS OF BUSES

Learning expectations:

Students will:

- recognize places and buildings within their community, both natural and human-made, and talk about their functions

You Will Need

- *The Library Bus*
- photos of buses or internet access
- art paper and paints, crayons, or markers
- map or globe

How To:

1. Show the cover and read the title and the names of the author and illustrator. Ask, “I wonder where this story happens? Do you think it’s near our school?” Invite students to articulate clues the illustrator has put in the picture to help us figure out where it is (e.g. the mountains, the style of houses). Tell them it happens in and around a city called Kabul. Use a map or a globe to compare the location of your school and the location of Kabul. Invite a few students to tell about a bus they have seen or ridden on. Ask if anyone has ever seen

a library bus. “Let’s read and find out about this library bus!” Show the front endpaper. “Here we get to see more of what the city of Kabul looks like.” Allow a few moments to view. Read the dedication page.

2. Read the book aloud, pausing to answer any questions the students have. At the end, remind students of the illustrator’s dedication: “To all the beautiful people who contribute in their own way to make the world a better place”. How did Pari and her mother help make the world a better place?
3. Discuss all the kinds of buses with which the students are familiar (e.g. school bus, transit bus, inter-city bus, charter bus). Show photos of a variety of buses. Invite students to tell how each one makes the world a better place. This could lead to a discussion of how taking public transit instead of driving a car reduces pollution, or if most students come to school by school bus, encourage them to appreciate the privilege and discuss bus manners and safety.
4. Invite each student to draw or paint a picture of a bus of their choice. When complete, invite them to tell what kind of bus it is and to explain how the bus makes the world a better place. Scribe their answers. Create a display using the paintings and inscriptions.

ACTIVITY 2: SENIOR KINDERGARTEN—ALL KINDS OF ALPHABETS

Learning expectations:

Students will:

- understand that different groups/communities may have different ways of being and working together
- demonstrate knowledge of most letters of the alphabet in different contexts

You Will Need

- *The Library Bus*
- Alphabet Page blackline master, one copy per student
- Internet
- to contact an Indigenous Elder



How To:

1. Introduce the book as in the above activity, omitting the discussion on buses.
2. Read the first four spreads. Ask (by show of hands) who knows how to sing the alphabet song and count to ten. Promise to do those things

later. Read the fifth spread. Ask who knows how to print the letters. Ask, “what might Farsi mean?” Explain that it is a different language which uses a different alphabet. Read the sixth and seventh spreads. Explain that there was a time in Afghanistan when it was against the law for girls to learn to read. Pari’s grandfather disagreed with the law and taught his daughter to read in secret. Read the eighth spread. What do students think of the mother’s assertion that learning makes you free? How is that true for us? (if necessary, suggest things like when they learn to read, students will not need to wait for an older family member to have the time to read their favorite book to them; higher education can lead to better jobs which may allow students to have more choices as they get older). After the twelfth spread, copy the acronyms WFP and UNHCR onto a chart or board. Explain that these stand for World Food Program and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, respectively. Say the words slowly, emphasizing the first sounds, while pointing to the initial letter of each word, so the students can begin to notice the sound-symbol association. Read the remainder of the book. Together, sing the alphabet song and count to ten.

3. Give each student a copy of the Alphabet page included below. Ask them to write their name on the line at the top of the page. Invite students to locate in the alphabet the first letter of their name and draw a self-portrait in the box for that letter. On an enlarged copy of the alphabet page, draw a simple bus outline in the box for B. Invite them to choose a letter on their own page, draw a picture of something that begins with that letter. Students who have a good grasp on the letters might complete their page in a few days. Beginners might take an entire term. The idea is that this will be a record of things each student knows, so avoid telling them a word that begins with each letter. You will teach them letter sounds in other contexts and they will acquire the knowledge at their own speed. When the alphabet is finished, it will be a reference page for the student and can be laminated.
4. On another day, turn to the fifth spread. Remind students that Pari and her mother speak Farsi, which uses a different alphabet. Show students

some of the letters and a sample of text written in this language, available here:

<https://omniglot.com/writing/persian.htm>

Use this opportunity to promote respect and admiration for people who can fluently read and write this beautiful language, which can be difficult for English-speakers to learn.

5. Explain that, just as there was a time in Afghanistan when girls were not allowed to read, there was a time in Canada when Indigenous children were not allowed to speak their own language. Explain that now, people are encouraged to learn these languages. Show students an alphabet used to write an Indigenous language in your area, such as this one:

<https://omniglot.com/writing/ojicree.htm>

Invite an Indigenous elder to come and speak to your class about their language and alphabet. Or view this video of students learning Ojibwe in Toronto:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q45pWNeXwCk>

ACTIVITY 3: GRADE 1—CHANGING ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Learning Expectations

Students will:

- describe how and why a person's roles, relationships, and responsibilities may change in different places or situations and at different times
- describe some of their own roles, relationships, and responsibilities

You Will Need

- *The Library Bus*
- chart paper and markers
- art paper and drawing materials

How To:

1. Introduce *The Library Bus* as in the previous activity and read it aloud.

2. Make a T-chart to compare Pari's roles and responsibilities with those of your students. Refer to the book when necessary. Your chart might look like this:

Pari	Our Class
- arrange the books	- dress myself
- clean up	- get along with my siblings
- be nice to the other girls	- take dishes to sink
- Mama's library helper	- go to school
- give out notebooks	- listen to the teacher
- help make dinner	- get along with other kids
- go to school (next year)	- do my work
- study hard (next year)	- put away toys

3. Invite students to think about how their roles and responsibilities will change next year, or when they are older.
4. Give students art paper creased to make a line down the middle. On the left, have them draw themselves fulfilling one of their current roles or responsibilities. On the right, invite them to draw themselves in some imagined future role. Write students' dictated explanations on their work.



ACTIVITY 4: GRADE 2—COMMUNITIES AROUND THE WORLD

Learning Expectations

Students will:

- identify continents, significant bodies of water, the equator, poles, and hemispheres, using a globe, print, or digital maps, and/or a mapping program
- identify the location of selected countries, cities, and/or towns around the world, and describe how their location and climate are related

You Will Need

- *The Library Bus*
- globe
- large world map or digital map
- paper copies of world maps for each student

How To:

1. Introduce *The Library Bus* and read it aloud.
2. Locate your community and Kabul on a globe and on a world map.
3. Collaboratively with your students, label the continents on a world map and ask them to identify on which continent your community is found, and on which continent Kabul is found. Identify the bodies of water which lie between the two (e.g. Atlantic Ocean, Mediterranean Sea).
4. Give each student a paper copy of a world map and have them label the communities, continents, and bodies of water discussed thus far. Some students might need to have pre-printed labels which they can attach with glue.
5. Read other books that describe life in a variety of places, such as *My Beautiful Birds* by Suzanne del Rizzo (Syria); *Sun Dog* by Deborah Kerbel, illustrated by Suzanne del Rizzo (the Arctic); *A Good Trade* by Alma Fullerton, illustrated by Karen Patkau (Uganda); *In a Cloud of Dust* by Alma Fullerton, illustrated by Brian Deines (Tanzania); *Community Soup* by Alma Fullerton (Kenya); *When the Rain Comes* by Alma Fullerton, illustrated by Kim Lafave (Sri Lanka); and *Adrift at Sea* by Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch

with Tuan Ho, illustrated by Brian Deines (Vietnam). After reading each one, mark the location on the world maps and identify the relevant continent and bodies of water.



6. On the cover, flyleaf, and within the story, read the references to the time during which girls were forbidden to learn to read. Help students understand (as much as you feel is appropriate) about the time of the Taliban regime, the war in Afghanistan, and how military men and women from your own country helped to bring about the current situation. Do students know anyone who served there?
7. Identify the latitude of Kabul and your own community. Investigate the climate of Kabul and compare it to your own. Compare styles of homes and clothing as well. Do the same with some of the other communities you have located.
8. Place *The Library Bus* in your reading corner so students can enjoy the illustrations up close.

ACTIVITY 5: GRADE 3—ART IN DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

Learning Expectations

Students will:

- demonstrate an awareness of a variety of works of art and artistic traditions from diverse communities, times, and places (e.g., a picture book that tells a story about people and the time and place in which they work, play, and build their community)

You Will Need

- *The Library Bus*
- a collection of picture books from diverse communities (see list in above activity)
- art paper, paints, or drawing tools



How To:

1. Introduce *The Library Bus* and read it aloud.
2. Invite students to explain how the artwork helps to explain Pari's culture (e.g. the second spread shows a particular house style, hanging laundry, and a goat in the yard; the third illustration explains what the author means by *chador*).
3. Select some other picture books from the list in the previous activity (step 5), and discuss what can be learned about those cultures from the illustrations. Place these books in your reading corner after reading them aloud.

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4. Have students create drawings or paintings that represent their own culture and community (e.g. homes, community places, activities) and display them.

ACTIVITY 6: GRADE 3—ART IN DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

Learning Expectations

Students will:

- explain why your country participates in specific international accords and organizations (e.g., the United Nations), and assess the influence of some significant accords and/or organizations in which your country participates
- analyze and construct different types of maps, both print and digital, as part of their investigations into global issues, their impact, and responses to them (e.g., locate on a digital map or in a print atlas the region affected by a conflict that has given rise to refugee camps)

You Will Need

- *The Library Bus*
- a large print or digital world map
- paper copies of a world map for each student
- internet

How To:

1. Introduce *The Library Bus* and read it aloud. Invite students to share what they know about different refugee camps around the world.
2. Locate Kabul and your own community on a large world map. Give students copies of a world map and have them label Kabul and your community. Tell students about the reign of the Taliban, the war in Afghanistan, and the participation of your own military in working toward a resolution. Invite students to tell of someone they know who served there.
3. The WFP (<https://www.wfp.org>) and UNHCR (<https://www.unhcr.org>) are mentioned in the story. Have students research these organizations and how people and governments support them.
4. In their research, have students learn of other places supported by WFP and UNHCR and mark them on their maps.

5. Remind students of the illustrator's dedication: "To all the beautiful people who contribute in their own way to make the world a better place." As a class, make and execute plan to make the world a better place (e.g. a fundraiser or other project to support refugees).

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Bibliography

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https://files.ontario.ca/books/edu_the_kindergarten_program_english_aoda_web_oct7.pdf



_____ 's Alphabet

Aa

Bb

Cc

Dd

Ee

Ff

Gg

Hh

Ii

Jj

Kk

Ll

Mm

Nn

Oo

Pp

Qq

Rr

Ss

Tt

Uu

Vv

Ww

Xx

Yy

Zz