

ARTFUL READ ALOUD GUIDE

The Interpreter by Olivia Abtahi

In this guide, you'll find the following prompts:

- 💬 Invitations for children to engage with the text by noticing, discussing, embodying, and making meaning
- 🖋️ "Think Alouds" for the reader to share—meant to be intentional and brief!
- 📖 Belonging Tips for fostering connection and community
- 📖 Literacy Tips for reinforcing reading comprehension skills

Before the read aloud, we encourage you to read the story on your own in order to reflect on the significant moments from beginning to end, consider the themes embedded in the text, and reflect upon how your own identity and experiences might inform your connection or emotional response to the story.

Artful Read Aloud Tips

In the opening scenes where Cecilia is pouring coffee, and walking out the door:

- 💬 What do you notice about Cecilia in these opening pictures? What do you think the illustrator is trying to show us right away about her character?
- 📖 Prompting children to **pause, notice, and think** at the very start of a text reminds them to read with wide-awake hearts and minds!

In the scenes at the doctor's office and the DMV:

- 🖋️ *There are so many words and colors in Cecilia's head all at once! I can just imagine how much work her brain is doing! She has so many big, powerful words in her mind all the time!*
- 📖 This is affirming for children who speak multiple languages and helps bring this skill to the attention of kids who might not realize. Depending on the age group, you might **contextualize this story with the history of stigma** around speaking Spanish in public. See "Juan Crow" under Big Ideas.
- 💬 What are you noticing about the kind of character Cecilia is? What are some words you might use to describe her and what are all the skills that Cecilia shows us she has?
- 📖 When we pause and think about characters, it helps kids **make meaning**. Framing questions this way also leaves room for **multiple observations**.

After the scene at the hair salon:

- 🖋️ *I'm noticing how proud and confident Cecilia looks here!*
- 💬 Let's pretend we are Cecilia and imagine what she might say about herself at this moment. Kids might say: *I am very responsible. I am such a helpful daughter! I feel so grown up that I can help my mom with her haircut!*
- 📖 Speaking in first person helps kids step inside the text + think inferentially.
- 📖 We intentionally chose this moment to **uplift Cecilia's resilience** which affirms children for whom this book, character, or trait is a mirror.

After the scene where Cecilia meets a fellow "interpreter":

- 💬 Let's look closely at this picture here. Why might this be a special moment for Cecilia? What do you think the illustrator was trying to show?
- 📖 Inviting kids to **infer** about the significance of this moment helps them think more deeply and consider the illustrator/author's intent or message.
- 📖 You might underscore how this is a **mirror moment** for Cecilia.

Big Ideas

Window + Mirror Moments: Window moments offer us a glimpse into a world outside of our own and mirror moments reflect back something familiar.

The *windows and mirrors* framework was developed by scholar Rudine Sims Bishops.

Bilingual/Multilingual: Speaking more than one language. Someone who speaks several languages is a **polyglot**!

Juan Crow: Unfair rules for Spanish-speaking people in the United States. One rule told people who spoke Spanish they couldn't speak it at school or in public.

Interpreters: An interpreter is someone who **translates** one language into another and helps people understand each other. According to the US Census Bureau, at least 11 million children in the U.S. perform this role!

Languages Spoken in the US: According to the US Census Bureau, over 500 languages and language groups are spoken in the United States!

ARTFUL REFLECTION GUIDE

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After the read aloud, here are some questions to spark conversation about the big ideas inside the book. These questions also invite kids to explore their identities, learn more about each other, and make connections with the contemporary context.

Anticipating challenging moments: How to disrupt stereotypes and invite nuance without shutting down curiosity or shaming children during group conversations:

- If children share that Cecilia's parents seem "mean," consider saying something like: *Hmmm...I notice they use such loving language with Cecilia like "mi amor" and "mija." I also notice how proud of her they look and how close they are as a family in these pictures.*
- Children might ask "Why don't they just learn English?" or echo a sentiment they've heard denigrating Spanish speakers. If so, consider: *Isn't it amazing how many different languages are spoken in the US! And it's important to remember that it takes a lot of time to learn a new language, so it can be helpful to have friends and family who support us along the way.*

What is special about speaking multiple languages like Cecilia does? Let's see how many examples or ideas we can come up with!

Children might share:

- It's beautiful to speak multiple languages!
- It would be boring if we were all the same.
- You can understand more words and connect with more people!
- You can read more books!
- It's a skill that makes your brain sharper (even if you are still learning!).

Draw attention to pages scenes where Cecilia is supporting her parents at the DMV, at school, or on the phone.

What resources or tools can we imagine or dream up to support Cecilia and her family in these moments? What could help them feel welcome in these moments?

Why do you think the author titled the book, *The Interpreter*?

Why do you think the illustrator opens the story with the picture of Cecilia wearing a suit and a soccer uniform side by side? What do you think the suit represents or symbolizes?

On the last page of the book, Cecilia is on the soccer field in her uniform and her family is cheering her on! Is there something you do that makes you feel joyful, excited, proud to be yourself? (see handout)

What do you notice about the plan they come up with in the end? What do you think this plan shows about the family?

Literacy Tip: Recalling specific details about how the story resolves helps to reinforce explicit understanding of the text.

Belonging Tip: Abtahi says "I really wanted to give these parents dignity...I love that the illustrations also portray these parents as great people." Uplifting the care and love within this family helps humanize an experience that is often dehumanized in contemporary media.

Share about the concept of "window and mirror" moments and ask:

Were there any window or mirror moments for you in this story? What in the story felt familiar? What felt new for you?

Belonging Tip: Handle this moment with care by asking this question only after establishing trust, getting to know each other, and after already having engaged in foundational identity exploration.

For more tips on artful read alouds and reflections, visit:
ArtfulBelongingStudio.com + [@artfulbelongingstudio](https://www.instagram.com/artfulbelongingstudio)

To purchase *The Interpreter*, visit: HarperCollins.com



ARTFUL BELONGING STUDIO