

Multicultural literature / Global stories and CCSS



Diane Kern, Ph. D. is an Associate Professor in the School of Education at the University of Rhode Island. She was a public school teacher for fourteen years and holds an elementary and secondary English teacher certification and is certified as a reading Specialist/consultant K-12. Diane teaches English language arts methods K-12, supervises student teachers, and is the

International Reading Association's coordinator for reading specialist master's program accreditation (IRA SPA Coordinator). She lives with her husband and two college-age children in South Kingstown, Rhode Island. dkern@uri.edu 401.874.9490.



Padma Venkatraman is the author of three novels: *A TIME TO DANCE*, *ISLAND'S END* and *CLIMBING THE STAIRS*. She turned to writing, her first love, after obtaining a doctorate in oceanography at the College of William and Mary and conducting post-doctoral research in Environmental Engineering at Johns Hopkins University. She enjoys reading from her work and speaking to students, teachers and librarians and has participated on panels at Harvard University, provided keynote addresses at teacher and librarian conferences, and was the commencement speaker at Lincoln school in RI. Her work was featured in the documentary *Library of the Early Mind*. Although born in India, Padma is an

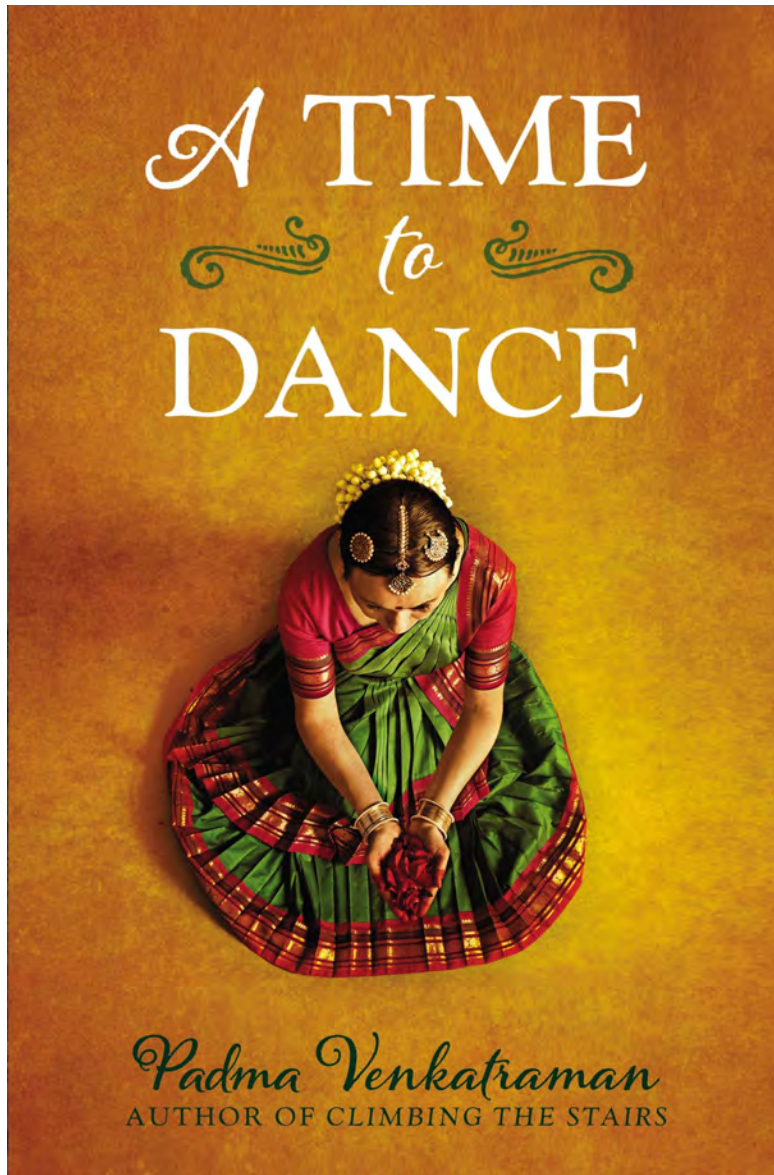
American and she lives in RI with her family.

www.padmasbooks.com , venkatraman.padma@gmail.com ,
padmatvenkatraman@jhu.edu , [@padmatv](https://twitter.com/padmatv) 401.294.4757



A librarian at Primary Source, **Jennifer Hanson** develops teacher professional development opportunities related to world histories/cultures. She has presented on global and multicultural literature, finding and evaluating information, and using technology in classrooms, at the Boston Book Festival, Children's Book Foundation, and Global Education, Massachusetts Teachers Association and ISTE conferences. jennifer@primarysource.org,

<http://www.primarysource.org>
[@libraryjenn](https://twitter.com/libraryjenn)



Veda, a dance ingénue, loses her leg in an accident. As she struggles to dance again, she reconnects with life more compassionately, awakens to love, and discovers the spiritual power of art.

Nancy Paulsen Books, Penguin, May 2014, ISBN #: 978-0-399-25710-0

ADVANCE PRAISE for A TIME TO DANCE
from National Book Award Winner, Gloria Whelan

With words that move with grace and elegance, Padma Venkatraman has chosen poetry to tell the story of Veda, an Indian girl whose whole life is centered around her love of dance...In poetic imagery as graceful as Veda's dancing, Venkatraman has drawn a vivid picture of contemporary India, and given a gift of faith and hope to all who, like Veda, find their dream slipping away.

* **Kirkus, Starred review:** "...Venkatraman weaves together several themes so elegantly that they become one..."

* **Booklist, Starred review:** "...To even have a passing thought that Veda is disabled, rather than differently abled, would be utter madness..."

* **VOYA, Starred review:** "...Told in verse, this story is magnificently strong, as Veda's determination dances off the page and into the reader's heart."

* **SLJ, Starred review:** " [an] exceptional novel ...captures beautifully the emotions of a girl forced to deal with a number of challenges ... sure to appeal..."

* **BCCB, Starred review:** "deftly-wrought free verse...heart-achingly hopeful...will remain with readers long after the final line"

Horn Book: "brief lines, powerful images and motifs of sound..."

Denver post: "...sure to go on my 'Favorite Books' list...will definitely dance its way through your heart as it did mine."

Chicago Tribune: "powerful depiction of a teen girl struggling to recover from an accident"

Providence Journal: "beautifully written...Venkatraman has created a rich, exotic and fully human world that dazzles and delights."

Newsday: "I loved this book...a love story, tragedy and spiritual read all at once."

IndieBound Citation: "For anyone looking to be uplifted and inspired, this stunningly lyrical novel comes highly recommended! "

Teen reads (online): "the spare writing adds so many layers of complexity and meaning with so few words... the voice is perfectly honest... Veda's relationships with her family and friends are authentically complicated, with every teenage mishap and embarrassment presented in its own unique context...The detail-rich setting creates a precise and interesting window into life in modern India...Veda's tenacity, determination and growing spirituality are inspiring..."

LitUp Reviews: "...every aspect shines, from its backdrop to its story to its writing..."

I heart YA fiction blog: "This is easily one of the most beautiful stories I've ever read. I love the verse/writing and the sheer beauty of the setting and characters. It's simply stunning... Overall, I can't recommend this one enough. It's beautiful, insightful, and it's a brilliant read."

The hiding spot blog: "A TIME TO DANCE shouldn't be missed."

Quercus, Winding Oak ezine: "a master storyteller...As with all of Ms. Venkatraman's books, I closed the covers reluctantly, knowing that *A Time to Dance* is a book that has become a part of me, one I will always remember."

Reading.org: "this is a story of India, of smells and scents, of dance and determination"

The absolute mag (online): "Even if you have never taken a dance class before, thanks to Venkatraman's poetic writing, you too will walk away from this novel with a new appreciation for spirituality, culture, and the triumph of the human spirit."

48 HBC: "Veda is a compelling heroine who undergoes a complicated personal journey, and Venkatraman's writing is gorgeous. It's also an intriguing glimpse into another culture."

Activity using an Excerpt (pg. 53-54) from

A Time to Dance by Padma Venkatraman

Experimental Project

Dr. Murali is followed into the room by a strange man
with flame-gold hair and bright blue eyes.

Is my pain medication making me hallucinate?

“We’re lucky,” Dr. Murali says, “to have, working with us,

Mr. James, from America,

who is collaborating with an Indian research team

to create cost-effective modern prostheses.

He’s agreed to help with your rehabilitation

and with the fitting and making of your prosthesis . . .”

He suggests I’m lucky, too, to be part of the project,

because my family doesn’t have enough insurance.

I feel the American’s eyes on me,

looking

as though I’m more than an amputee, a number, a chore.

He crosses over to me, his strides large, a broad smile on his lips.

“Veda? Did I say your name right?” He sounds sincerely concerned.

“Yes, Doctor.”

“Call me Jim. Please.” His left hand in his pocket,

he holds his right hand out to me.

As though we’re equals.

“Thank you, Doctor—I mean—just Jim,” I say.

He chuckles. “Haven’t done anything yet.”

He *has*.

No older man ever invited me to shake hands.

No other adult ever asked me to call them by name.

He even said “please” although I’m a patient.

A smile tugs at face muscles I haven’t used for a while.

My hand slips into his

as though it remembers his touch

and we’ve held hands often

in a previous life.

“Think it over,” he says. “Take as long as you need.”

I let my fingers stay in his pale palm

like brown roots sinking into chalky white soil. “I’ll do it.”

“Good,” Dr. Murali says. “He’ll have you
walking fine in no time.”

“I don’t want to walk fine.
I want to dance.”

The American—just-Jim—lets my hand go,
but his gaze holds me.
His eyes, blue and bright,
light a sparkle of hope inside me.

Questions (aligned to CCSS assessments)

1. What does the author mean by the title of the verse “Experimental Project”? Use details from the text to support your response.
2. Highlight the parts of the text that provide evidence to support the idea that Veda has a positive first interaction with Mr. James (also known as Jim).
3. Use what you learned reading *A Time to Dance* by Padma Venkatraman and “Marathon bombing survivor Adrienne Haslet-Davis...” from the *Boston Globe* to write an essay that analyzes how Veda’s experience is similar to Adrienne-Haslet Davis’s. Develop your essay using textual evidence for both texts. Be sure to follow the conventions of Standard English.

Informational text:

Marathon bombing survivor dances onstage at TED talk

By Bella English | GLOBE STAFF MARCH 19, 2014

http://www.bostonglobe.com/lifestyle/2014/03/19/marathon-bombing-victim-adrienne-haslet-davis-dances-onstage-ted-talk/N7P3EF3zmrGXtE9brkndxN/story.html?p1=Article_Facet_Related_Article

Professional dancer Adrienne Haslet-Davis, who lost her lower left leg in the Boston Marathon bombings, took to the stage Wednesday afternoon to do a short rhumba wearing a prosthetic leg made for her at the MIT Media Lab. Haslet-Davis, who has taught 20 different types of dance at Arthur Murray Dance Studio in Boston, performed briefly at a TED Conference in Vancouver, B.C.

Hugh Herr, director of biomechatronics at the Media Lab, was at the conference to explain the design of the leg, which he made with a team of scientists savvy in prosthetics, robotics, and biomechanics. Herr is a double amputee, resulting from a rock climbing accident in 1982. He first met Haslet-Davis at Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital and thought he could help. The dancer's husband, Air Force Captain Adam Davis, suffered a cut nerve and artery in his left foot in the bombing and had a skin graft from his right thigh to repair his right foot, which was peppered with shrapnel. He had just returned to Boston two weeks earlier from a deployment in Afghanistan when the couple decided to spend a nice spring day watching the Boston Marathon.

After the TED performance, Haslet-Davis stood alongside dancer Christian Lightner and wiped away tears.

"I'm thrilled to have danced again. It was invigorating to dance publicly with my new leg, but also to realize that my return to dance may have the power to inspire other people to reach for their goals and be proactive in their lives," she said in a statement. "I was always determined to dance again, and I knew that I had to, that I would, and here I am. My first dance happening to be so near the anniversary of the marathon bombing stands as a reminder that I'm a survivor, not a victim."

The statement continued: "I want to thank the people of Boston for their incredible support on every day of my journey. And of course, I'd like to thank Hugh Herr, the director of the Biomechatronics group at The MIT Media Lab and founder of BIOM, for his determination to create the leg that allowed me to dance again, and to this amazing international conference, TED, for inviting Hugh to speak and me to dance."

Using Video as a primary source (activity)

- Clayton Bates dancing
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hayM4B7hcBQ>
- Adrienne Haslet-Davis dancing
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZQVO6Wi_7c8
- Bharatanatyam (Veda's dance form):
- <http://thehidingspot.blogspot.com/2014/08/review-time-to-dance-by-padma.html?spref=tw>

1. How is Veda's style of dancing different from that of Peg Leg Bates and Adrienne Haslet-Davis?
2. What do the Bates and Davis videos convey about dancing with a disability? Do you think it was important for the dancers to show that disability doesn't prevent them from dancing?
3. When and where in A TIME TO DANCE does Veda become as comfortable with her disability as these dancers? What does she do/say that shows her love for dance? Cite textual evidence.
4. How does the power of her art help Veda overcome disability?

Discussion Questions – A TIME TO DANCE

1. What small and large hurdles does Veda have to overcome after her accident? Which of these hurdles are explicitly shown in the text and which of the hurdles can you infer from the text?
2. When Veda meets Kamini for the last time in the novel, Veda suggests that the accident actually helped her grow. Cite specific places in the text where Veda seems to feel this way, and what aspects of growth she attributes to the loss of her limb. What are some other places in the text where you might infer that she overcomes challenges that shape and strengthen her personality, although this is not explicitly stated?
3. Compare Veda's stage performance before her accident with the scene in which she dances alone beneath the banyan tree and in the final scene of the novel. What words and phrases in the text show the change in Veda's attitude to dance?
4. Do you think Veda's character changes as the story progresses? What actions does she take that indicate she is growing less self-centered? How do you think Veda's personal growth contributes to her deepening

understanding of dance?

5. How does Veda's passion for dance deepen and change after she acquires a new teacher? How does Veda's role as a teacher help her grow? What role do her students play in helping her learn?
6. Veda remarks that Jim's politically correct words help lessen her pain in a small way. What does his choice of words reveal about his character? To what extent do you think it matters to use politically correct terms when we speak?
7. When do you think there is a key turning point in Veda's relationship with her mother? How does dialogue show the development in their relationship?
8. How does Patti's attitude to coping with tragedy and her positive world view, contribute to Veda's mental recovery? What specific words and actions of Patti's reveal her inner strength?
9. What actions and metaphors convey the various emotions Veda experiences in the hospital after her accident?
10. What figurative language (cite the text) helps the reader understand and feel empathy for Veda's phantom pain?
11. What role does the allusion to the Buddhist story of Gautami's loss of a son play in Veda's acceptance of her loss?
12. Read Walt Whitman's *Proud Music of the Storm*. How does he approach and express the themes of spiritual bliss attained through dance? How does young Veda communicate her understanding of the deeper aspect of her dance tradition and her inner-growth through her experience of relearning dance? In what fundamental way does narrative poetry that is tied to story-telling and born from one particular character's voice change the way a theme, such as "the power of art" is approached?
13. Veda's point of view differs from her care-givers' points of view during several situations that arise in the hospital, at the bus stop and at school. Cite places in the text where Veda's ironic/sarcastic comments and wry sense of humor help alleviate her pain.
14. How are Jim and Govinda different, especially in terms of the roles they play in Veda's life and the way she sees them? What are some specific places (cite the text) in which Jim's responses indicate that his

attitude to Veda is not romantic? How does this insert gentle humor into an otherwise bleak situation?

15. Is gentle humor present in other places in the situation? How is this effected?
16. As Veda's story begins (in the Prologue, *Temple of the Dancing God*) what details of time, place and voice help orient the reader to the narrator and the setting of the story?
17. How do Veda's descriptions and actions in the *Temple of the Dancing God* introduce the reader to her relationship with dance? How do Veda's reflections, dialogue and actions in the verse *Hoping and Waiting* establish the characters of Paati, Ma and Pa? How does dialogue develop their characters and conflicts?
18. In the verse *Time* how is Veda's shift of thought from the present to the past signaled? How does the brief flashback reiterate her passion for her art and reinforce aspects of her character and the characters of Shobana and Mrs. Subramaniam and Veda's relationship with them?
19. What words, phrases, comparisons, details and aspects of sensory language help express Veda's various emotional states in the verse *Speed*?
20. How does Veda's experience of winning an important dance competition help build toward her intense shock after the accident? If the story had begun with the verse *Waking* (instead of starting with Veda's narration of earlier events) might a reader have felt the same level of empathy for her loss?
21. Is there any art, craft, or other activity that you feel as passionately about as Veda does for dance? Using what you have learned by studying the sequence of verses in *A TIME TO DANCE*, write about something you love doing, focusing on a key event that triggered your passion and on any hurdles you encountered that threaten to keep you from devoting as much time and attention to it as you would like (or nearly destroyed your ability to pursue this passion). Employ relevant details and effective techniques, as Veda does, to show, rather than tell the reader how you felt and help build toward a climax/conclusion that shows your success or failure to overcome the hurdle.

22. Conduct a short research project to discover and briefly describe a few dance traditions from parts of the world other than India. Compare these forms of dance and generate your own related questions on dance (modern and contemporary) the world over.
23. Veda's story is inspired by true stories of differently-abled dancers. Research the life story of a differently-abled person who, like Veda, overcame hurdles to accomplish his/her goal. Compare and contrast this person's experiences with the turning points in Veda's story. How are this person's emotions similar to or different from Veda's feelings? Did this person undergo any change in attitude that parallels the growth in Veda's character? Substantiate your answers with quotations, provide a list of references (print and digital), and justify how you assessed the credibility of the references you cited.
24. Compare and contrast Russell Freedman's biography of *Martha Graham* with *A TIME TO DANCE* in terms of how each work approaches the following related themes: a young woman's passion for dance; overcoming hurdles to become an exceptional dancer; obsession with awards/recognition versus inner spiritual growth through art; pushing one's creative artistic expression through dance.
25. How do events and themes in *A TIME TO DANCE* reflect the Biblical philosophy expressed in Ecclesiastes of a 'time for every purpose under heaven'?
26. How does Veda's story in *A TIME TO DANCE*, set in contemporary India, draw on themes and characters from Indian tradition as well as India's religious history, symbolism and mythology? What are some similarities and differences between your spiritual/philosophical/religious outlook and Veda's?
27. Do you have or do you know someone who is differently abled? What challenges do they face on a daily basis? Imagine how your school day and routine might change if you were physically disabled. Write about this situation, paying attention to small details.

Activities presented in this workshop align w/ the following CCSS:

Writing in History, Science, Technical Subjects / Reading informational texts
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.6-12.W & WHST.9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Reading History/Social Studies

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.6-12.RH.1. Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.6-8.RH.5 Describe how a text presents information (e.g., sequentially, comparatively, casually).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.6-12.RH.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.11-12.RH.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

CCSS cross references for discussion questions (question numbers provided)

Reading Literacy

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.6-12.RL.1. Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text. Q 1-2

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.6-12.RL.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text. Q 3-5

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.6-12.RL.3 Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision. Q 6-8

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.6-12.RL.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts. Q 9-11

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.6-12.RL.5 Compare and contrast the structure of two or more texts and analyze how the differing structure of each text contributes to its meaning and style. Q 12

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.6-12.RL.6 Analyze how differences in the points of view of the characters and the audience or reader (e.g., created through the use of dramatic irony) create such effects as suspense or humor. Q 13-15

Writing

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.6-12. W 3 a. Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and point of view and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically. Q 16

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.6-12. W 3 b. Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, and reflection, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters. Q 17

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.6-12. W 3 c. Use a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence, signal shifts from one time frame or setting to another, and show the relationships among experiences and events. Q 18

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.6-12. W 3 d. Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events. Q 19

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.6-12. W 3 e. Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on the narrated experiences or events. Q 20

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.6-12. W 3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences. Q 21

Research to Build and Present Knowledge

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.6-12. W 7. Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration. Q 22

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.6-12. W 8. Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation. Q23

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.6-12. W 9. “Compare and contrast texts in different forms or genres [e.g., stories and poems; historical novels and fantasy stories] in terms of their approaches to similar themes and topics”). “Compare and contrast a fictional portrayal of a time, place, or character and a historical account of the same period as a means of understanding how authors of fiction use or alter history. “Analyze how a modern work of fiction draws on themes, patterns of events, or character types from myths, traditional stories, or religious works such as the Bible, including describing how the material is rendered new”.Q 24 - 27