

Read It Again, Mama!

by NAWAL QAROONI



Nawal is a Chicago-based educator, literacy consultant, and writer. Forever passionate about growing readers, writers and thinkers, Nawal worked as a classroom teacher, literacy coach and curriculum developer in Brooklyn and Chicago before launching NQC Literacy in 2014. She and her team support schools and districts by facilitating professional development and coaching around a holistic, balanced approach to literacy instruction: always looking through lenses of cultural-sustainability, inclusion and equity. Nawal earned a Bachelor of English from the University of Michigan, a Master of Teaching from Brooklyn College, and a Master of Journalism from Syracuse University's Newhouse School. She won a New Jersey Press Association Award for her international reporting and transitioned into education as a New York City Teaching Fellow. She is the proud daughter of immigrants and her role as a mother to four multiethnic, multilingual kids shapes her approach as an educator. You can find Nawal in Chicago's Logan Square neighborhood or on Twitter at [@NQCLiteracy](https://twitter.com/NQCLiteracy)

This afternoon, once backpacks were piled in the hallway baskets and lunchboxes were dismantled, after steaming quesadillas and apple slices with assorted nut butters, I re-read two of Oge Mora's books with my two youngest girls, Eloisa and Ezzat. I love when my kids pair off and I get two-to-one Mama time, when they're less climbing and clamoring for my attention like little bears but more calm and willing to slow down. The sun slanted sideways through the windows, and though it's still brisk out, it felt warm indoors where we sat on the hardwood, legs outstretched. I would guess these books have been read by my kids at least 100 times, no exaggeration, as they're the every-night requests, no matter how tired we all are, no matter how many other library books are stacked in their bins. Oge Mora is never out of rotation.

Saturday and *Thank You, Omu*. I call the second one culturally nourishing, because it's delightfully community-oriented and centered around sharing stew— showing love, really, through cooking with care. And *Saturday* shares the relationship between a mother and her young daughter so beautifully. My girls revel in all the ways they have fun together on Saturdays: at the salon, the park, the library, the puppet show. They love the repetition. They appreciate the collage cut-out illustrations. I use both texts in classrooms all the time.

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I'm often asked by friends if it's alright their kids want to re-read books, and I find myself shouting OF COURSE while trying not to stay in all caps. Books on repeat are reassuring. They're warm security blankets. They're comfort. And for my littles, who don't fully know how to read

alphabetically yet, their memorization and memories of having the book read aloud by grownups in their lives supports their reading of pictures so they, too, can read the stories to each other. Stories that communicate love.

I want for all kids to have opportunities to read to siblings and play with words and re-read them again with their caregivers like we did this afternoon. I want for all kids to find stories that resonate with them equally. Stories that stick. Stories that soothe.

