

## Guide to:

# Gibberish

Written and illustrated by Young Vo

**Publisher:** Levine Querido

**Publication Date:** 2022

**Language:** English.  
Also available in Spanish.

**ISBN-10:** 1646141105

**ISBN-13:** 978-1646141104

**Genre:** Fiction

**Lexile:** AD480L

**Guided Reading Level:** G

**Grade Level:**  
Preschool – Grade 3

**Featured Country of Origin:**  
Vietnam

**Themes:** language learning,  
friendship, newcomer, school,  
feelings

### Publisher's Synopsis

It's Dat's first day of school in a new country! Dat and his Mah made a long journey to get here, and Dat doesn't know the language. To Dat, everything everybody says, from the school bus driver to his new classmates, sounds like gibberish. How is Dat going to make new friends if they can't understand each other? Luckily there's a friendly girl in Dat's class who knows that there are other ways to communicate, besides just talking. Could she help make sense of the gibberish?

### What We Love

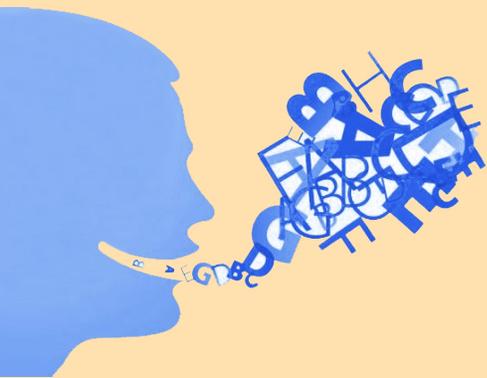
This charming story creatively conveys Dat's confusion and frustration from not understanding the language and the power of a friendly gesture. Even the illustrations go from black and white, outlandish characters to more realistic, color characters as Dat becomes more comfortable in his new home. The story mirrors the author's own experience coming to the United States as a refugee from Vietnam.

### Background

English learners (ELs) are a growing population in U.S. schools, and all students benefit from gaining insight into their experiences. In 2019, approximately 10 percent of public school students in the United States were identified as ELs, although this varied widely from state to state, with Texas having the highest percentage at 19.6 percent and West Virginia the lowest at 0.8 percent (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022).

### Pronunciation and Vocabulary

- Young Vo: Pronounced "Voh"
- Dat: Pronunciation rhymes with "cat"
- Gibberish: Nonsense sounds or writing
- Nodded: When you nod you bend the head downward or forward (as in bowing or going to sleep) or bending up and down as a way of answering "yes"
- Unexpected: If something is unexpected, it surprises you because you did not think that it would happen



## Gibberish (continued)

### Pre-Reading Focus Questions

- What does it mean to communicate?
- Think of a time when you had trouble communicating. How did you feel?
- What are some ways to communicate? (facial expressions, body posture, gestures/hand signals, intonation, pictures/drawings/sketches, labels)

### Extension/Higher Level Thinking

- What did the author mean when he described Julie as “something **unexpected?**”
- Do you know of anyone in your classroom or school who might hear gibberish? How do you think they may feel?
- How do you think you or your school might help?
- Have you ever heard gibberish? How did you feel? What did others do to help? What did you do to help yourself?

### About the Book Author/Illustrator (by publisher)

Young Vo learned to draw before he could write. He drew a lot of characters then began to write stories for them. There were not many job choices that he could make, so he decided to be an animator, illustrator and author. Now he writes and draws his stories before the sun rises, then during the day, he animates. Follow him on Instagram @youngvoarte

### After-Reading Discussion Questions

- How did Dat feel at the beginning of the story? Why do you think he felt that way?
- How did he feel at the end of the story? Why did he feel that way?
- What were some ways Julie communicated with Dat?

### Interdisciplinary

This story can be connected to social studies units on community and immigration.

### Additional Resource



#### P&P Live! Young Vo GIBBERISH with Minh Lê:

Young Vo discusses his book with author Minh Lê and addresses the color scheme, use of symbols and inspiration.

### About the Consultant Carolyn McElligott

Carolyn McElligott co-authored and provided guidance for this guide. She is currently a K-5 EL teacher at Melrose Public Schools in Massachusetts. During her tenure in Melrose she has taught second grade, delivered instructional coaching to Pre-K – fifth grade educators and taught adult English learners.

### About The Immigrant Learning Center

The Immigrant Learning Center, Inc. of Malden, MA, is a not-for-profit organization that gives immigrants a voice in three ways. The English Language Program provides free, year-round ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) classes to help immigrant and refugee adults in Greater Boston become successful workers, parents and community members. The Public Education Institute informs Americans about immigrants and immigration in the United States. The Institute for Immigration Research, a joint venture with George Mason University, conducts research on the economic contributions of immigrants.