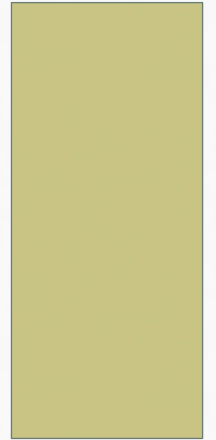


CULTURALLY DIVERSE LITERATURE

CHAPTER 1



WHAT DOES DIVERSITY INCLUDE?

- Race and ethnicity, gender and class, sexual preference, exceptionalities are types of diversity found in literature for young readers

All good books present/consider:

- Values, attitudes, customs, beliefs, ethics
- What is unique to an individual culture and universal to all cultures

WHAT IS CULTURALLY DIVERSE LITERATURE?

- All literature is cultural in that books are culturally situated
- In practice, only a subset of this literature is labeled “multicultural,” or “culturally diverse”
- Refers to people from groups that have been marginalized in society, or “parallel cultures”

WHY IS GOOD CULTURALLY DIVERSE LITERATURE IMPORTANT?

It illuminates similarities and differences in people around the world and thus educates readers about our unique situations and our common humanity.

“The best books offer an experience that is more like looking through a window as light slowly darkens. At first one sees clearly through the window into another’s world – but gradually, as the light fades, one’s own image becomes reflected, too.”

(Lee Galda)

WHY IS CULTURALLY DIVERSE LITERATURE IMPORTANT?

- If children never see themselves reflected in literature, they receive the message that they are not important to society.
- If children never see other cultures in books, they get the message that people from other cultures are not valuable in our society.

WHY IS GOOD CULTURALLY DIVERSE LITERATURE IMPORTANT?

- Over **5,000** books for children are published in the US each year
- Small percentage of books published in the US are by or about parallel or international cultures
- Less than **1%** of books published in the US have been translated from another language

WHY IS GOOD CULTURALLY DIVERSE LITERATURE IMPORTANT?

- Contributes to cultural understanding in a positive way
- Explores cultural differences in an accurate and sensitive manner
- Shows diversity within culture as well as across culture

3 WAYS TO DESCRIBE CULTURALLY DIVERSE BOOKS

- Painted faces
- About culture and diversity
- Culturally rich

THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN EVALUATING LITERATURE

- Literary and visual artistry
- Visual and verbal stereotyping
- Authenticity and accuracy
- Perspective and world view

QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE SELECTING LITERATURE FOR THE CLASSROOM

- Do the author and illustrator present insider perspectives?
- Whose understanding is being presented?
- Is the culture portrayed multi-dimensionally?
- Are cultural details authentic/accurate? naturally integrated?
- Is the language used authentic?
- Does the work promote stereotypes?

WHAT TO AVOID IN A CULTURALLY DIVERSE TEXT

- Demeaning or inaccurate language or illustration
- Essentializing
- Stereotypes
- Cultural appropriation

HOW CAN TEACHERS ASSESS AUTHENTICITY AND ACCURACY?

- Question, be a critical reader
- Ask insiders for input on cultural nuances
- Use good review sources
- Look at cultural award winners (not just Caldecott and Newbery)
- Get to know trusted authors

HOW CAN TEACHERS DEAL WITH AUTHENTICITY AND ACCURACY?

- Look at the artistic quality of the writing as well as the cultural quality
- Consider quality in individual books but balance diversity across the entire collection

