Building Empathy & Agency (K-12): Examining Immigration through Children’s Literature

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“The function of multicultural [and international] literature is to ensure that students have the opportunity to reflect on it in all its rich diversity, to prompt them to ask questions about who we are now as a society and how we arrived at our present state, and to inspire them to actions that will create and maintain social justice.”

(McGinnis, 2006, p. 25)
MULTICULTURAL AND INTERNATIONAL LITERATURE

Multicultural literature: “diverse” cultural, religious, etc., groups within the U.S. (e.g., Mexican-American)

International literature: published outside the U.S. or depicting life outside of the U.S. (e.g., Caribbean, Hmong, Mexico, Syria)
DIVERSE CHILDREN’S LITERATURE TEXT SETS

• Strengthen **critical literacy** skills through exploring multiple perspectives *(Freire, 1998; Harste, Leland, & Lewison, 2008)*

• Deepen **content area knowledge** *(Dressel, 2005)*

• Foster **democratic relationship development and commitment to global service** *(Banks, 2007; Dressel, 2005; Heilman, 2008)*
DIVERSE CHILDREN’S LITERATURE TEXT SETS

• Develop life long learning practices (Campoy & Flor Ada, 2004; Lepman, 2002)

• Explore cultural authenticity (Fox & Short, 2003)

• Foster multicultural awareness and understanding of global contexts (Freeman & Lehman, 2001; Freeman, Lehman, & Scharer 2010; Lepman, 2002)

• Stimulate multimodal literature responses (Flor Ada & Campoy, 2004; Lepman, 2002)
TEXT SETS DEFINED

- Resources teachers compile of different genres, media & reading levels
- Fiction, nonfiction, poetry
- Charts, historical documents, maps, paintings, photographs, songs, movies, dictionary (picture)
- Used as read alouds & research base for multimodal response activities
- Stored in containers sorted by theme
- Growing collection of texts in classroom library
Text Set Theme: Immigrants & Refugees

Children’s Books (International)

Brothers in Hope
by Mary Williams
Illustrated by R. Gregory Christie
The Story of the Lost Boys of Sudan

Ziba Came on a Boat
Written by Liz Lofthouse
Illustrated by Robert Ingpen

Four Feet, Two Sandals
Written by Karen Trebst Williams
Illustrated by Donna Steinberg

The Colour of Home
by Mary Hoffman
Illustrated by Karin Littlewood

Dia’s Story Cloth
by Dia Cha
Illustrated by Chue and Nui Thao Cha
The Hmong People’s Journey of Freedom

Stepping Stones
A Refugee Family’s Journey
Written by Nigar Ali Gate
Illustrated by Maggie Bourke
Provoke Strategy (pre-during-post reading)

- Frontload 10-20 vocabulary words/phrases
- Create story elements for with category headings
- Students sort the words into categories & make text predictions
- Read story aloud
- Check predictions for deeper understanding
STRATEGIES FOR EXPLORING MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

- Write a letter from a character or a new perspective
- Two-column response journals
- Jot-chart of key ideas
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character and Text Selection</th>
<th>Setting / Geographic Location</th>
<th>Character traits, including ethnic or religious heritage</th>
<th>Significant events / Character’s Experiences with Discrimination or Hardship</th>
<th>Others who helped the character</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Text Connections (Text-self, text-text, text-world)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lailah in <em>Lailah’s Lunchbox...</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Grandmother in <em>The Lotus Seed</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Little Boy in <em>How Many Days to America?</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rama in <em>Stepping Stones</em></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
STRATEGIES FOR EXPLORING MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

Contact:
Dr. Amie Sarker
for information!
STRATEGIES FOR EXPLORING MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

Expository writing prompts in the secondary classroom
STRATEGIES FOR EXPLORING MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

- Character concept map
- Predictions from photos
- Two-voice poem
THE REFUGEE AND THE IMMIGRANT:
A TWO VOICE POEM
BY AMIE SARKER
Reader Response: Create Your Own

- WRITE A LETTER HOME FROM BA’S PERSPECTIVE
- MAKE A 2-COLUMN RESPONSE JOURNAL
- MAKE A JOT CHART FOR BA & HER GRANDSON
- COMPOSE AN EXPOSITORY ESSAY ABOUT THE STORY
- DRAW A CHARACTER CONCEPT MAP FOR BA OR HER GRANDSON
- COMPOSE A 2-VOICE POEM FOR BA AND HER COUSIN
## Toronto Empathy Study

### Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELEMENTARY</th>
<th>SECONDARY</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Upsets me to see someone treated disrespectfully – 11 pt shift</td>
<td>- Upsets me to see someone treated disrespectfully – 1 pt shift</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- In tune with other people’s moods – little change</td>
<td>- In tune with other people’s moods – 99% of students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**On the whole, student responses much more empathetic post-lesson!**
“The imperative of learning to live together ethically and justly has been put back on the table. Our students need a literacy education that provides critical engagements with globalized flows of information, image, text, and discourse.” (Luke, 2003, p. 20)
REFERENCES


CHILDREN’S LITERATURE CITED

- **The Day War Came** by Nicola Davies
- **How Many Days to America?: A Thanksgiving Story** by Eve Bunting (Caribbean)
- **My Name is Sangoel** by Karen Lynn Williams & Khadra Mohammed (Africa)
- **The Lotus Seed** by Sherry Garland (Viet Nam)
- **Lailah’s Lunchbox** by Reem Faruqi (Abu Dhabi)
- **My Name is Yoon** by Helen Recorvits (Korea)
- **Juana and Lucas** by Juana Medina (Colombia)
- **The Keeping Quilt** by Patricia Palacco (Russia)
- **Mango, Abuela and Me** by Meg Medina
- **Dear Primo: A Letter to My Cousin** by Duncan Tonatiuh (Mexico)
- **Dia’s Story Cloth** by Dia Cha (Viet Nam)
- **The Colour of Home** by Mary Hoffman (Somalia)
- **Ziba Came on A Boat** by Liz Lofthouse
- **Stepping Stones: A Refugee Family’s Journey** by Margriet Ruurs (Syria)
- **Four Feet, Two Sandals** by Karen Lynn Williams & Khadra Mohammed (Afghanistan)
- **Brothers in Hope: The Story of the Lost Boys of Sudan** by Mary Luana Williams (Sudan)
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