Teaching Empathy: Exploring Multiple Perspectives through Children’s Literature Text Sets

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

International literature: published outside the U.S. or depicting life outside of the U.S. (e.g., Iraq, Bangladesh, Bulgaria)
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

- Resources teachers compile of different genres, media & reading levels
- Fiction, nonfiction, poetry
- Charts, historical documents, maps, paintings, photographs, songs, movies, dictionary (picture)
- Used as a read aloud or as research base for activities
- Stored in containers sorted by theme
- Growing collection of texts in classroom library
Text Set Theme: Muslim Americans & Refugees
Children’s Books

- Four Feet, Two Sandals
- My Librarian Is a Camel
- Nasreen’s Secret School
- Coming to America
- One Green Apple
READER RESPONSES EXPLORING MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

- Two-voice poem
- Character concept map
- Write a letter from a character or a new perspective
- Predictions from photos
- Jot chart of key ideas
The Refugee and the Immigrant

A Two Voice Poem

By Amie Sarker

We
made the choice

To leave my homeland

I have
Hopes

Dreams

I see
Opportunity

I came because the grass...
Is greener on the other side

We
were suddenly forced

To leave my homeland

I have
Fears

Nightmares

I see
Danger

I came because the grass...
Was burning beneath me
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My family</th>
<th>My family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prepared for a year</td>
<td>Mostly died during the war</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before coming to this country</td>
<td>Before coming to this country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I could be</td>
<td>I could be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>Educated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undocumented</td>
<td>Or illiterate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I hope to</td>
<td>I hope to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make a better life</td>
<td>Live in safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to know...</td>
<td>I want to know...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can I learn from you?</td>
<td>Can I trust you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will you help me?</td>
<td>Will you love me?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you even understand me?</td>
<td>Do you even understand me?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My name is</td>
<td>My name is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrant</td>
<td>Refugee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your ESL student</td>
<td>Your ESL student</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES


Children’s LITERATURE Cited

- One Green Apple by Eve Bunting
- My Name Was Hussein by Hristo Kyuchukov
- Yasmin’s Hammer by Ann Malaspina
- My Name Is Bilal by Asma Mobin-Uddin
- The Day of Ahmed’s Secret by Florence Parry Heide & Judith Heide Gilliland
- My Librarian Is a Camel by Margriet Ruurs
- Four Feet, Two Sandals by Karen Lynn Williams & Khadra Mohammed
- The Librarian of Basra by Jeanette Winter
- Nasreen’s Secret School by Jeanette Winter
- Coming to America by Bernard Wolf
Secondary LITERATURE Cited

- Does My Head Look Big in This? by Randa Abdel-Fattah
- The Prophet by Khalil Gibran
- The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini
- And the Mountains Echoed by Khaled Hosseini
- A Thousand Splendid Suns by Khaled Hosseini
- Three Cups of Tea by Greg Mortenson & David Oliver Relin
- I Am Malala by Malala Yousafzai
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