

2006

## The effects of multicultural literature in the classroom

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## The effects of multicultural literature in the classroom

### Degree Type

Open Access Senior Honors Thesis

### Department

Teacher Education

### Keywords

Multiculturalism in literature, Multicultural education

### Subject Categories

Teacher Education and Professional Development

THE EFFECTS OF MULTICULTURAL LITERATURE IN THE CLASSROOM

by

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A Senior Thesis Submitted to the

Eastern Michigan University

Honors College

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Graduation

with

Honors in Teacher Education

January 13, 2006

## **Introduction/Rationale**

Imagine this. It is your first day of school. You are sitting at your desk ready for the teacher to begin teaching. All of a sudden the teacher begins speaking in Japanese and you only know English. How are you going to understand what is being asked of you? For many children who come to America from other countries this is all too common of an experience. What can we as teachers do to make their school experiences less frustrating?

I have been working in a preschool for three years and the majority of the children at the school are from a minority culture. I have both seen children being frustrated and been frustrated myself by a simple inability to understand the other person's language. It is vitally important to be able to understand what others are trying to say. More important, however, is the ability to understand what others are experiencing. It is vital for teachers to be able to understand their students' perspectives.

Literature of any kind can be important for children of other cultures. I have worked extensively with a child who moved to this country at the age of 2 ½ and taught himself how to speak fluent English simply by listening to stories. He learned all his basic vocabulary by listening to stories. Now at the age of 4, he speaks English as fluently as any native speaker. He loves stories and can "read" many of his favorites.

Multicultural literature has special effects for both students and teachers. Minority students feel recognized and understood when their culture is acknowledged. Students from the mainstream culture learn that there are other perspectives and ways of doing things that are just as valuable as their own. Multicultural literature can also play a very important role for teachers. As educators we have all experienced the feeling of

wishing that a child would just “behave.” By learning about other cultures it might open our eyes to the fact that what we may consider unusual or a form of misbehavior is considered a sign of respect in another culture. Students may believe that they are behaving very appropriately when in fact they may be doing the opposite of what you asked them to do simply because they did not understand the directions.

Our society is becoming increasingly diverse and it is more important now than ever before to learn all that we can to truly create a welcoming classroom atmosphere.

## **Review of the Literature**

In order to discuss multicultural literature, we must first define it. At the most basic level, multicultural literature includes literature about people who are considered to be outside of the mainstream of society and have been marginalized in some way (Canales, Lucido & Salas, 2002). More narrowly defined, multicultural literature focuses on people of color from diverse cultural, linguistic and religious groups (Canales, Lucido & Salas, 2002).

### **Why is it important?**

Why even bother to include multicultural literature in the school curriculum one might ask? For starters not all of our students are the same. By 2020, 50% of the students in our schools will be minorities and 85% of our teachers will be white females, who differ from their students racially, culturally, and in social status (Canales, Lucido & Salas, 2002; Diamond & Moore, 1995). The number of interracial marriages in the United States now exceeds 1.7 million (Johnson & Lee, 2000).

Why does it matter if students read about themselves skeptics might wonder? In a recent article, Hefflin and Barksdale-Ladd (2001) discuss the importance of children relating to characters and situations found in books reflective of their own culture. Students need to be able to make connections between literature and their everyday lives. Literature can provide children with a sense of affirmation about themselves and their culture (Colby & Lyon, 2004). This ability to relate to characters and situations in books can be a major factor in book selection (Colby & Lyon, 2004).

When children don't find themselves reflected in books, they are less likely to be engaged in the reading process. Also, they receive the subtle message that school is not

for people like them (Colby & Lyon, 2004). Students are often asked to make connections to what they are reading, so it is important that they are able to find characters and situations that they can relate to in the books that they are reading. Multicultural literature can be used to create a classroom where all students are valued (Colby & Lyon, 2004).

Multicultural literature can be used as a tool to open students' minds. It helps to stimulate an understanding of diversity in the classroom and helps to build an understanding of and respect for people from other cultures. Also, multicultural literature can be used to examine racism (Colby & Lyon, 2004). Literature is a powerful tool to weaken and dissolve racism.

The importance of multicultural literature is even more important with younger children because they receive the majority of their messages through pictures. If children of color never see themselves in literature, will they feel devalued? Also, if the majority's culture children never see children of color in literature, will they not develop negative attitudes about children who do not look like them (Joshua, 2002)? When students realize the effects of seeing only white people portrayed in books, they begin to empathize with children from unrepresented cultures in children's literature (Colby & Lyon, 2004). The lack of awareness that there is a certain privilege that skin color can grant you continues to be a problem with both adults and children alike.

Other benefits include a development of vocabulary, stimulating imagination, facilitating empathy, increased knowledge of one's own heritage, and fostering positive self-concepts and identity (Taylor, 1997). Multicultural literature can teach children more about their cultural heritage, as well as pride for their past.

## **Goals of Multicultural Literature**

There are six main goals in teaching children multicultural literature. First, multicultural literature increases sense of self-worth and a sense that they have a chance for a successful future. Knowledge about other cultural groups lays the foundation for developing cultural pluralism, which is defined as a condition in which many cultures coexist within a society and maintain their cultural differences (dictionary.com), intergroup harmony and the ability to think from a multicultural perspective (Ford, Harris & Howard, 1999).

The second goal includes achieving educational equity. Educational equity has three basic conditions: a) an equal opportunity to learn, b) positive educational outcomes for both individuals and groups, and c) equal physical and financial conditions for students to grow to their fullest potential cognitively, academically, and affectively (Ford, Harris & Howard, 1999).

The third goal is working towards cultural pluralism. When educators support cultural pluralism they modify fundamental conditions to promote equitable learning. Their goal is to help students develop understanding and respect for people who are different from them (Ford, Harris & Howard, 1999).

The fourth goal of multicultural literature is to create a sense of empowerment in students. Students must help students become independent learners. Empowerment also helps student take an active role in improving the lives of others (Ford, Harris & Howard, 1999).

The fifth goal includes the ability to work in groups in harmony. Educators provide knowledge and skills that prepare students to work with members of their own



cultural groups and other cultural groups. Instruction includes opportunity for students to work with and learn from each other (Ford, Harris & Howard, 1999).

The final goal includes teaching from a multicultural perspective. This means educators must challenge assumptions and stereotypes. For example, teachers need to select literature that does not promote stereotypical perspectives. Also, teachers must see that culture, race, gender, religion, SES, and ability are variables in the learning process (Ford, Harris & Howard, 1999).

### **Criteria for Selecting Multicultural Literature**

One of the most important things to consider when choosing any book is to make sure that it relates to the children's lives (Meier, 2003). If children don't feel a sense of connection to what they are reading they will not feel compelled to try to understand the book, therefore losing any benefits they may have gained.

In order for a multicultural book to do the culture justice the characters should be authentic, not stereotyped (Canales, Lucido & Salas, 2002). The characters must reflect the distinct cultural experiences and views of the specific group that is being portrayed (Diamond & Moore, 1995). Going along with this idea, character representations must be portrayed in a true-to-life and balanced manner. The characters and cultures should show both good and bad characteristics (Canales, Lucido & Salas, 2002; Diamond & Moore, 1995).

The settings should be consistent with the environment of the culture that is being portrayed (Canales, Lucido & Salas, 2002; Diamond & Moore, 1995). Also, the themes that are developed within the story must be consistent with the values, beliefs, customs, traditions, needs and conflicts of the specific culture (Canales, Lucido & Salas, 2002;

Diamond & Moore, 1995). In addition, the pictures, gender roles, and language characteristics of the cultural group should be accurate (Canales, Lucido & Salas, 2002; Diamond & Moore, 1995).

When choosing multicultural literature we do not want to offend the cultural group that we are trying to portray. The literature must be free of stereotypes in language, illustrations, behavior, and character traits (Diamond & Moore, 1995). Also, the language used must show sensitivity to the culture as certain terms can be considered very offensive.

### **Categories of Multicultural Literature**

There are four main categories of multicultural literature: racism, poverty, gender equity, and religious beliefs (Brown, Davis, Liedel-Rice & Soeder, 1995). The five main cultural groups included in multicultural literature are African-American, Latino American, Asian American, Native American, and Jewish (Bigler, 2005). Although these are the cultural groups that we typically see represented in children's literature they are by no means the only cultural groups that should be or are represented. It is also important to include literature about Middle-Eastern, Indian, South American and other cultural groups.

### **Barriers in Teaching Multicultural Literature**

There are several barriers that can interfere with effective use of multicultural literature. First there is the much debated insider/outsider status (Kruse, 2001). This argument essentially states that the experiences of any cultural group can only be effectively presented by people who are actually members of that group. The idea that

naturally follows from this theory is that outsiders are incapable of empathizing with the experiences of people who are different from them (Kruse, 2001).

A second barrier is the idea of diversity vs. universality (Kruse, 2001). This includes the idea that there is always a risk that celebrating differences may actually build up cultural barriers. However, to state that people are essentially the same ignores the role of race and ethnicity in shaping children's experiences and perceptions (Kruse, 2001).

Another barrier includes the idea of informing vs. empowering (Kruse, 2001). As an outsider to a specific cultural group, we may merely be informing students about a culture instead of empowering them to take charge as an insider to the group would be able to take charge.

The final barrier is the idea of empathy vs. defensiveness (Kruse, 2001). Studies have found that older children become increasingly defensive about injustices to different cultures, while younger students seem to express outrage and sadness. Students who are uncomfortable with injustices may deny prejudice, attribute negative behaviors to minorities or through charges of reverse racism (Kruse, 2001).

### **Strategies for Teaching Multicultural Literature**

There are several general strategies that can make reading in general more fun and can be especially effective in teaching multicultural literature. First, it is important to teach book reading behaviors explicitly (Meier, 2003). This includes responding to known-answer questions. This includes asking students questions in which answers are found directly in the text. These are known as right there questions. Another helpful strategy is the ability to make books come alive for the children (Meier, 2003). Children

can dramatize the stories that they read, while teachers can use dolls and puppets to act stories out to the class. This helps students form powerful attachments to the literature (Meier, 2003).

The first strategy specific to multicultural literature stresses the importance of introducing students to literature rather than simply exposing them to literature (Kruse, 2001). Introducing a text implies that you are establishing an acquaintance with that text, along with a possibility that further dialogue will ensue. Unlike exposures, introductions suggest pleasant and sustained engagements with diversity (Kruse, 2001). It is not enough to simply bring in a story about another culture and read it to the students. It is vital to teach students the connections that they can take from the literature and apply to their own lives. Also, it should be the routine, not the exception, to use multicultural literature in the classroom.

A second strategy stresses the difference between a Eurocentric vs. Multicultural world view (Kruse, 2001). Although there may be a general pattern of thinking for the different cultural groups, the teacher should emphasize that intragroup diversity applies to members of all cultural groups. Within each cultural group there are always exceptions to what is generally common among members of the group (Kruse, 2001). Rather than attributing an experience or identity to a single aspect such as race or ethnicity, it is important to individualize the experience. No one piece of literature should speak for an entire cultural group (Kruse, 2001).

It is important to approach celebrations and holidays for the various cultures on their own terms rather than considering them similar to or different from local norms (Kruse, 2001). Decentering the local culture by resisting comparisons, which may be

inaccurate, increases students' awareness not only of diversity, but of the culturally constructed nature of one's world view (Kruse, 2001).

Finally, it is important that you do not simply tell about a story or experience (Kruse, 2001). It is important to take the time to discuss what you have read as you would with any good piece of literature. Differences should not be minimized nor should stereotypes be perpetuated (Kruse, 2001).

### **Banks' 4 Levels of Integration**

James Banks has developed a model for integration of multicultural content into the curriculum (Canales, Lucido & Salas, 2002; Ford, Harris & Howard, 1999). At the lowest level of the model, the Contributions Approach, educators focus on the highlights, heroes, and holidays of a particular culture (Canales, Lucido & Salas, 2002; Ford, Harris & Howard, 1999). This approach is the most frequently adopted and extensively used in schools, yet it is also the most simplistic. In this approach, the traditional ethnocentric curriculum remains unchanged in its basic structure, goals, and characteristics. Cultural traditions, foods, music, and dance may be discussed, but little attention is given to their meaning and significance to minority groups (Ford, Harris & Howard, 1999). This level is a good example of the strategy that stresses the importance of introducing students to multicultural literature rather than simply exposing them to the literature. It is not enough to simply tell the students about these ideas; the ideas and concepts must be discussed at a deeper level.

At the next level, the Additive Approach, content, concepts, and themes that reflect other cultures are added to the curriculum without thoroughly integrating and connecting the cultural concept throughout the curriculum (Canales, Lucido & Salas,

2002; Ford, Harris & Howard, 1999). Again, you are simply telling a story at this stage. This level is where teachers can fall into the trap of simply comparing and contrasting similarities and differences among cultures.

The third level is the Transformational Approach in which the structure of the curriculum is changed to provide students with the opportunity to view concepts, issues, events, and themes from the perspectives of different cultural groups (Canales, Lucido & Salas, 2002; Ford, Harris & Howard, 1999). This is where we can challenge the assumption that a Eurocentric world view is best. Strategies are used to teach students to have empathy and see the world through other people's views rather than just their own. This can include the use of role-play activities and drama.

The highest level is the Social Action Approach. Here, students identify social problems and concerns, make decisions, and take actions to help resolve the problems they have identified (Canales, Lucido & Salas, 2002; Ford, Harris & Howard, 1999). Students feel empowered and are proactive; student self-examination becomes central in this level (Ford, Harris & Howard, 1999). This is more than simple discussion or role-playing. This is where students take action and make a difference. This includes something as simple as desegregating the seating in the cafeteria or writing letters to get policies changed.

### **African-American Children's Preferences in Multicultural Literature**

It is interesting and extremely worthwhile for teachers to examine the literature preferences of children. There was a study (Taylor, 1997) that looked at the responses of African-American and Hispanic students to two types of African-American contemporary fiction: melting pot and culturally conscious stories. Culturally conscious stories are

written to depict an authentic African American perspective and lifestyle while melting pot stories are usually written from a mainstream (European) perspective (Taylor, 1997). There was also a smaller category of literature included, socially conscious literature, which focuses on the conflicts that occurred between African Americans and Europeans when integration took place. These types of books were intended to help non-African American readers empathize and tolerate African-American children (Taylor, 1997).

In the melting pot stories, African-Americans are included in stories about non-African Americans. Most of the African-Americans are reduced to the background and are of little importance. In these books most differences, except skin color, are ignored. The majority of these books are picture books; they are not concerned with racial prejudice (Taylor, 1997).

The culturally conscious stories reflect the social and cultural traditions associated with growing up African-American in the United States. The primary purpose of these stories is to allow authors to speak to African-American children about themselves and their lives (Taylor, 1997). Some of the elements found in these books are: use of Black English dialect, relationships between young and old, extended families, awareness of skin color, tradition of naming, inclusion of African-American historical and cultural traditions, and focus on African-American religion (Taylor, 1997). In the study (Taylor, 1997), the African-American students showed a strong preference for culturally conscious literature, while the Hispanic students rated these books less favorably.

### **Literary Criticism/Some Common Mistakes**

There are several frequent dangers that teachers can fall pray to when selecting multicultural literature for their classroom. Teachers sometimes get caught up in the

common assumption that a book is multicultural and worthwhile if it has non-European characters or themes in it and if it is critically acclaimed in well-known journals (Mendoza & Reese, 2001).

Observers in early childhood classrooms have noted two other problems that frequently occur with educators. One is the assumption that a single book about a group can adequately portray that group's experience. Another mistaken belief is the idea that one can easily find a wide range of good-quality multicultural literature in libraries and bookstores (Mendoza & Reese, 2001).

A final problem is the fact that teachers can feel overwhelmed by the prospect of finding and evaluating the books. They don't want to offend anyone but they worry that they might inadvertently select and share inappropriate books. Teachers' days are already very busy and interrupted; any new task, even if it is worthwhile, can seem enormous (Mendoza & Reese, 2001).

Reliable, in-depth background information about the diverse groups and cultures in the United States is essential to evaluating multicultural children's literature. One way to address these issues is by checking with people of the culture about the content of a book and its authenticity. Unfortunately, this information may not have been part of teachers' basic education or everyday experience (Mendoza & Reese, 2001).



## **Classroom Implications**

We are going to get more diverse in our classrooms in the coming years. Students need to be able to relate what is going on in the classroom to their own lives. If children don't find themselves reflected in what they are learning, then they are less likely to be engaged.

Multicultural literature also creates a community within the classroom because students learn that not only are differences tolerated, they are also embraced. This will help to cut down on the bullying and teasing that takes place in the classroom. Students will be able to empathize with the injustices suffered by their classmates. Students will be better able to work harmoniously in groups.

Through working with Erin, I have learned how valuable literature is for speakers of other languages. As Erin and I read literature together, she learned basic phonemic awareness. The combination of pictures and words helped her learn English in a way that words alone could not. Part of the reason why it is so important to use multicultural picture books is because the pictures can be used as a point of references even if the teacher does not speak the child's native language. Also, the pictures give the child options for what they want to learn more about. Erin loved asking me what a word was in English and then comparing it to the Hebrew word. Pictures also help with comprehension because visual images tend to be universal.

There are numerous ways to incorporate multicultural literature into the classroom. Self-awareness is an important theme that is discussed in African-American literature. The story Bein' This Way With You by Nikola-Lisa is written in rap and celebrates diversity. The message in this book is that despite people's physical

differences we are alike. Nikki Grimes' poem, "Sweet Blackberry", from the book Meet Danitra Brown, teaches kids how to deal with teasing about their physical appearance. After reading these stories, and others with a similar theme, students could draw a portrait of a classmate or create a "Wanted" poster that identifies a special quality in a classmate (Carazo, 1997; Flynn, 1995). Another very important theme in African-American literature is the concept of families. It is important to choose books that portray African-American males in a positive way, such as Daddy by Jeanette Caines. Students can create family portraits, write essays and poems about family members, and invite family members to the classroom to see their work (Carazo, 1997; Flynn, 1995). Another important theme in all types of multicultural literature is the idea of friendships, especially interracial ones. Possible activities tied to the theme of friendship include webbing the characteristics of friendship, pen pals, and writing stories and poems about friendship and specific friends (Carazo, 1997; Flynn, 1995). Finally, another important theme in African-American literature is children's relationship to the community. Faith Ringgold's Tar Beach is an excellent story for addressing this issue. Activities include taking a field trip in your local community, inviting different members of the community (police, firefighters, etc.) to come talk to students about their jobs, and a community service project such as planting a garden (Carazo, 1997; Flynn, 1995).

An important theme in Asian-American literature is the process of immigrating to the United States and learning the language. Many Asian-American and Latino American stories deal with the difficulties that these students face when trying to be accepted by their peers. After reading stories dealing with this issue, students that speak another language could teach their English speaking peers a few key phrases from their

language (Cheun, K.; Chiu, E.; Mah-Rice, D.; & Yamabe, J., 1996; Davan, 2005; Sutherland, 1997). Not only is this a learning experience for both groups of students, it teaches students that everyone has something valuable to offer. Another important theme is the concept of cultural appropriateness. Many students learn that gestures or actions that are acceptable in their country are not acceptable in America and vice-versa. Students can discuss various actions that are considered rude and/or polite by others (Cheun, K.; Chiu, E.; Mah-Rice, D.; & Yamabe, J., 1996). When immigrating, another important theme discussed in multicultural literature is the idea that some items have to be left behind in the native country. Students could create a list of items that they would take if they were only allowed to pack their most prized possessions. Students could also create a simulated journal describing their feelings when they had to leave those items behind (Cheun, K.; Chiu, E.; Mah-Rice, D.; & Yamabe, J., 1996). Another theme is cultural differences in how we eat. It would be an interesting and fun learning experience for students to practice eating their food with chopsticks (Cheun, K.; Chiu, E.; Mah-Rice, D.; & Yamabe, J., 1996; Davan, 2005).

Through multicultural literature, you are able to open many doors and cross over barriers to reach your students. Books can provide students with one-on-one instruction about a culture when you may not be able to find the time. Using multicultural literature allows you to open up a world of opportunities to all students.

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## **Appendices**

## Annotated Bibliography

### Racism

- 1) Felita: **Mohr, Nicholasa (1999)**. *Felita*. **New York: Penguin Putnam Books for Young Readers**. A vivid portrayal of a close-knit Hispanic community. Felita's parents promise she will love their new neighborhood. Only Abuelita, her grandmother, understands how much Felita will miss her old block, and her best friend Gigi. Sadly, her new neighbors taunt and tease Felita and her family because they are from Puerto Rico.
- 2) The Story of Ruby Bridges: **Coles, Robert (1995)**. *The Story of Ruby Bridges*. **New York: Scholastic**. For months, six-year-old Ruby Bridges must confront the hostility of white parents when she becomes the first African American girl to integrate Frantz Elementary School in New Orleans in 1960.

### Poverty

- 3) Bud, Not Buddy: **Curtis, Christopher Paul (1999)**. *Bud, Not Buddy*. **New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Books for Young Readers**. Ten-year-old Bud, a motherless boy living in Flint, Michigan, during the Great Depression, escapes a bad foster home and sets out in search of the man he believes to be his father--the renowned bandleader, H.E. Calloway of Grand Rapids.
- 4) Forged by Fire: **Draper, Sharon Mills (1997)**. *Forged by Fire*. **New York: Simon & Schuster Children's**. As a neglected toddler of a drug-addict mother, Gerald almost burns to death in his apartment. Rescued by his strong, loving Aunt Queen, Gerald enjoys a warm secure life for a few years; unfortunately, Aunt Queen dies and Gerald's mother and a cruel, abusive stepfather enter his



life. The only positive part of this new family is his gentle, younger, half-sister, Angel whom he struggles to protect from his evil stepfather.

- 5) Just Juice: Hesse, Karen (1999). *Just Juice*. New York: Scholastic. Realizing that her father's lack of work has endangered her family, nine-year-old Juice decides that she must return to school and learn to read in order to help their chances of surviving and keeping their house.

### **Religious Beliefs**

- 6) The Devil's Arithmetic: Yolen, Jane (1990). *The Devil's Arithmetic*. New York: Penguin Putnam Books for Young Readers. During a Passover Seder, 12-year-old Hannah finds herself transported from America in 1988 to Poland in 1942, where she assumes the life of young Chaya. Within days the Nazis take Chaya and her neighbors off to a concentration camp, mere components in the death factory. As days pass, Hannah's own memory of her past, and the prisoners' future, fades until she is Chaya completely.
- 7) The Breadwinner: Ellis, Deborah (2001). *The Breadwinner*. New York: Groundwood Books. Because the Taliban rulers of Kabul, Afghanistan, impose strict limitations on women's freedom and behavior, eleven-year-old Parvana must disguise herself as a boy so that her family can survive after her father's arrest.
- 8) Magid Fasts for Ramadan: Lewis, Earl B. (2000). *Magid Fasts for Ramadan*. New York: Houghton Mifflin. Magid, an eight-year-old Muslim boy in Cairo, is determined to celebrate Ramadan by fasting, despite the opposition of family members who feel that he is not yet old enough to fast.

- 9) Just Plain Fancy: **Polacco, Patricia (1994)**. *Just Plain Fancy*. **New York: Random House Books for Young Readers**. Naomi, an Amish girl whose elders have impressed upon her the importance of adhering to the simple ways of her people, is horrified when one of her hen eggs hatches into an extremely fancy bird.

### **Interracial Families**

- 10) Black is Brown is Tan: **Adoff, Arnold (2004)**. *Black is Brown is Tan*. **New York: Harper Collins Children's Books**. Describes in verse a family with a brown-skinned mother, white-skinned father, two children, and their various relatives.
- 11) How My Parents Learned to Eat: **Friedman, Ina R. (1987)**. *How My Parents Learned to Eat*. **New York: Houghton Mifflin**. An American sailor courts a young Japanese woman and each tries, in secret, to learn the other's way of eating.
- 12) Two Mrs. Gibsons: **Igus, Toyomi (2001)**. *Two Mrs. Gibsons*. **New York: Children's Book Press**. One little girl, Toyoni, the product of a biracial marriage, shows how two women from different parts of the world, Tennessee and Japan, affect her life. Although they are from different cultures, her rich experiences bind them all together through their love for each other.
- 13) Winter Wood: **Spohn, David (1991)**. *Winter Wood*. **New York: Harper Collins Children's Books**. A young boy and his father go out to the winter woods to chop firewood, enjoying the work and the natural world around them.

- 14) Black, White, Just Right: **Davol, Marguerite W. (1993).** *Black, White, Just Right.* **New York: Albert Whitman.** A girl explains how her parents are different in color, tastes in art and food, and pet preferences, and how she herself is different too, but just right.
- 15) Horace: **Keller, Holly (1991).** *Horace.* **New York: Greenwillow Books.** Horace, an adopted child, realizes that being part of a family depends on how you feel and not how you look.
- 16) Ginger Brown: Too Many Houses: **Wyeth, Sharon Dennis (1996).** *Ginger Brown: Too Many Houses.* **New York: Random House Children's Books.** When her parents get a divorce, six-year-old Ginger lives for a while with each set of grandparents and begins to understand her mixed background and her new family situation.
- 17) The Rabbits' Wedding: **Williams, Garth (1969).** *The Rabbits' Wedding.* **New York: Harper Collins.** The story of a white rabbit and a black rabbit who get married in the forest.

### **Egypt**

- 18) Zekmet the Stone Carver: **Stolz, Mary (1991).** *Zekmet the Stone Carver.* **New York: Harcourt.** Chosen to design a magnificent monument for a vain and demanding Pharaoh, an Egyptian stone carver conceives of and begins work on the Sphinx which still stands in the Egyptian desert today.
- 19) Mummies Made in Egypt: **Aliki (1985).** *Mummies Made in Egypt.* **New York: Harper Collins Children's Books.** Describes the techniques and the reasons for the use of mummification in ancient Egypt.

## African-American

- 20) The Patchwork Quilt: **Flournoy, Valerie (1985)**. *The Patchwork Quilt*. New York: **Dial**. Using scraps cut from the family's old clothing, Tanya helps her grandmother and mother make a beautiful quilt that tells the story of her family's life.
- 21) The Village of Round and Square Houses: **Grifalconi, Ann (1986)**. *The Village of Round and Square Houses*. New York: **Little, Brown & Company**. A grandmother explains to her listeners why in their village on the side of a volcano the men live in square houses and the women in round ones.
- 22) A Million Fish...More or Less: **McKissack, Patricia C. (1992)**. *A Million Fish...More or Less*. New York: **Random House Children's Books**. A boy learns that the truth is often stretched on the Bayou Clapateaux, and gets the chance to tell his own version of a bayou tale when he goes fishing.
- 23) The Hundred Penny Box: **Mathis, Sharon Bell (1978)**. *The Hundred Penny Box*. New York: **Viking Children's Books**. Michael's love for his great-great-aunt who lives with them leads him to intercede with his mother, who wants to toss out all her old things.
- 24) The Black Snowman: **Mendez, Phil (1991)**. *The Black Snowman*. New York: **Scholastic**. Through the powers of a magical kente, a black snowman comes to life and helps young Jacob discover the beauty of his black heritage as well as his own self-worth.
- 25) Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears: **Aardema, Verna (1978)**. *Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears*. New York: **Penguin Putnam Books for**

**Young Readers.** Mosquito tells iguana such a preposterous tall tale that iguana puts sticks in his ears so he won't have to hear her nonsense. This causes a chain of events that upsets all the animals. When lion calls a council to solve the problem, the animals realize mosquito is at fault. To this day, mosquitoes whine in people's ears to ask if everyone is still angry.

26) Willie's Not the Hugging Kind: **Barrett, Joyce Durham (1989).** *Willie's Not the Hugging Kind.* **New York: Harper Collins Children's Books.** Willie's best friend Jo-Jo thinks hugging is silly, so Willie stops hugging everybody, but he soon misses giving and getting hugs from his family.

27) More Than Anything Else: **Bradby, Marie (1995).** *More Than Anything Else.* **New York: Orchard Books.** Nine-year-old Booker works with his father and brother at the saltworks, but dreams of the day when he'll be able to read.

28) The Stories Julian Tells: **Cameron, Ann (1989).** *The Stories Julian Tells.* **New York: Knopf Publishing Group.** This story is told through episodes about seven-year-old Julian's life which include getting into trouble with his younger brother Huey, planting a garden, what he did to try to grow taller, losing a tooth, and finding a new friend.

29) The Story of Ruby Bridges: **Coles, Robert (1995).** *The Story of Ruby Bridges.* **New York: Scholastic.** For months, six-year-old Ruby Bridges must confront the hostility of white parents when she becomes the first African American girl to integrate Frantz Elementary School in New Orleans in 1960.

- 30) Grandpa's Face: **Greenfield, Eloise (1996)**. *Grandpa's Face*. **New York: Penguin Putnam Books for Young Readers**. Seeing her beloved grandfather making a mean face while he rehearses for one of his plays, Tamika becomes afraid that someday she will lose his love, and he will make that mean face at her.
- 31) The People Could Fly: **Hamilton, Virginia (2004)**. *The People Could Fly*. **New York: Random House Children's Books**. In this retelling of a folktale, a group of slaves, unable to bear their sadness and starvation any longer, calls upon the African magic that allows them to fly away.
- 32) Jamaica Tag-Along: **Havill, Juanita (1990)**. *Jamaica Tag-Along*. **New York: Houghton Mifflin**. When her older brother refuses to let her tag along with him, Jamaica goes off by herself and allows a younger child to play with her.
- 33) Amazing Grace: **Hoffman, Mary (1991)**. *Amazing Grace*. **New York: Dial**. Grace loves stories, and with a boundless imagination she acts them all out. One day, her teacher asks who would like to play the lead in the play Peter Pan. Grace eagerly raises her hand, but Raj tells her she isn't a boy, and Natalie tells her she can't because she is black. Nana sets Grace straight: she can do anything she sets her mind to! Grace's talent bursts forth, and she wins the audition hands down.
- 34) Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt: **Hopinson, Deborah (1995)**. *Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt*. **New York: Knopf Publishing Group**. A young

slave stitches a quilt with a map pattern which guides her to freedom in the North.

- 35) Mayfield Crossing: **Nelson, Vaunda Micheaux (2002)**. *Mayfield Crossing*. **New York: Penguin Putnam Books for Young Readers**. When the school in Mayfield Crossing is closed, the students are sent to larger schools, where the black children encounter racial prejudice for the first time. Only baseball seems a possibility for drawing people together.
- 36) Dinner at Aunt Connie's House: **Ringgold, Faith (1993)**. *Dinner at Aunt Connie's House*. **New York: Hyperion**. Dinner at Aunt Connie's is even more special than usual when Melody meets not only her new adopted cousin but twelve inspiring African-American women, who step out of their portraits and join the family for dinner.
- 37) Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters: **Step toe, John (1987)**. *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters*. **New York: William Morrow & Company, Inc**. Mufaro's two beautiful daughters, one bad-tempered, one kind and sweet, go before the king, who is choosing a wife.
- 38) Working Cotton: **Williams, Shirley Anne (1997)**. *Working Cotton*. **New York: Harcourt Children's Books**. A young black girl relates the daily events of her family's migrant life in the cotton fields of central California.

### **Native American**

- 39) Annie and the Old One: **Miles, Miska (1985)**. *Annie and the Old One*. **New York: Little, Brown & Company**. When Annie's Navajo grandmother says

that when Annie's mother's rug is completely woven that the grandmother will die, Annie tries to hold back time by unweaving the rug in secret.

40) Thirteen Moons on Turtle's Back: **Bruchac, Joseph (1997)**. *Thirteen Moons on Turtle's Back*. **New York: Penguin Putnam Books for Young Readers.**

Celebrates the seasons of the year through poems from the legends of such Native American tribes as the Cherokee, Cree, and Sioux.

41) Cheyenne Again: **Bunting, Eve (1995)**. *Cheyenne Again*. **New York: Houghton Mifflin.** In the late 1880's, a Cheyenne boy named

Young Bull is taken to a boarding school to learn the white man's ways.

42) The Girl Who Loved Wild Horses: **Goble, Paul (1986)**. *The Girl Who Loved Wild Horses*. **New York: Simon & Schuster Adult Publishing Group.** A

Native American girl loves horses and spends all her free time with them. When a storm hits, she and her horses are forced to flee and they end up lost, but a handsome stallion, the leader of the wild horses, welcomes her to live with them. Gradually the girl relinquishes her life with her people, and years later, turns into a beautiful mare herself.

43) Legend of the Indian Paintbrush: **DePaola, Tomie (1991)**. *Legend of the Indian Paintbrush*. **New York: Penguin Putnam Books for Young Readers.**

Little Gopher follows his destiny, as revealed in a Dream-Vision, of becoming an artist for his people and eventually is able to bring the colors of the sunset down to the earth.



- 44) Dream Wolf: **Goble, Paul (1997)**. *Dream Wolf*. **New York: Simon & Schuster's Children**. When two Plains Indian children become lost, they are cared for and guided safely home by a friendly wolf.
- 45) Knots on a Counting Rope: **Archambault, John and Martin, Bill (1997)**. *Knots on a Counting Rope*. **New York: Henry Holt & Company, Incorporated**. A grandfather and his blind grandson, Boy-Strength-of-Blue-Horses, reminisce about the young boy's birth, his first horse, and an exciting horse race.

### **Asian American**

- 46) The Rajah's Rice: **Barry, David (1994)**. *The Rajah's Rice*. **New York: W. H. Freedman Company**. When Zandra, the official bather of the Rajah's elephants, saves them from serious illness, she exacts from the Rajah a reward more costly than he realizes.
- 47) Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes: **Coerr, Eleanor (1998)**. *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes*. **New York: Penguin Group**. Hospitalized with the dreaded atom bomb disease, leukemia, a child in Hiroshima races against time to fold one thousand paper cranes. She hopes to verify the legend that by doing so a sick person will become healthy.
- 48) One Grain of Rice: **Demi, Hitz (1997)**. *One Grain of Rice*. **New York: Scholastic**. A reward of one grain of rice doubles day by day into millions of grains of rice when a selfish raja is outwitted by a clever village girl.
- 49) Grandfather Tang's Story: **Tompert, Ann (1991)**. *Grandfather Tang's Story*. **New York: Crown Books for Young Readers**. Grandfather tells a story

about shape-changing fox fairies who try to best each other until a hunter brings danger to both of them.

50) Year of Impossible Goodbyes: **Choi, Sook Nyul (1992)**. *Year of Impossible Goodbyes*. **New York: Houghton Mifflin**. A young Korean girl survives the oppressive Japanese and Russian occupation of North Korea during the 1940s, to later escape to freedom in South Korea.

51) Carp for Kimiko: **Kroll, Virginia L. (1996)**. *Carp for Kimiko*. **New York: Charlesbridge Publishing, Inc**. Although the tradition is to present carp kites only to boys on Children's Day, Kimiko's parents find a way to make the day special for her.

52) Bracelet: **Uchida, Yoshiko (1996)**. *Bracelet*. **New York: Penguin Putnam Books for Young Readers**. Emi, a Japanese American in the second grade, is sent with her family to an internment camp during World War II, but the loss of the bracelet her best friend has given her proves that she does not need a physical reminder of that friendship.

### **Latino American**

53) Pedro and the Padre: **Aardema, Verna (1991)**. *Pedro and the Padre*. **New York: Dial Books for Young Readers**. Pedro is a Mexican boy who has two major faults: he is lazy, and he has no trouble telling a lie to get himself out of a sticky situation. After he falls asleep one too many times while working on his father's farm, Pedro is sent out into the world to make a living, then taken in by a kind padre who offers shelter and food in return for chores. But Pedro cannot camouflage his flaws.

- 54) Day's Work: **Bunting, Eve (2004).** *Day's Work.* **New York: Houghton Mifflin.** When Francisco, a young Mexican American boy, tries to help his grandfather find work, he discovers that even though the old man cannot speak English, he has something even more valuable to teach Francisco.
- 55) Abuela: **Dorros, Arthur (1997).** *Abuela.* **New York: Penguin Putnam Books for Young Readers.** While riding on a bus with her grandmother, a little girl imagines that they are carried up into the sky and fly over the sights of New York City.
- 56) ...And Now Miguel: **Krumgold, Joseph (1976).** *...And Now Miguel.* **New York: Harper Collins Children's Books.** Every summer the men of the Chavez family go on a long and difficult sheep drive to the mountains. All the men, that is, except for Miguel. All year long, twelve-year-old Miguel tries to prove that he, too, is up to the challenge - that he, too, is ready to take the sheep into his beloved Sangre de Cristo Mountains. When his deeds go unnoticed, he prays to San Ysidro, the saint for farmers everywhere. And his prayer is answered...but with devastating consequences.
- 57) Birthday Basket for Tia: **Mora, Pat (1992).** *Birthday Basket for Tia.* **New York: Simon & Schuster Children's.** With the help and interference of her cat Chica, Cecilia prepares a surprise gift for her great-aunt's ninetieth birthday.
- 58) Too Many Tamales: **Soto, Gary (1993).** *Too Many Tamales.* **New York: Penguin Putnam Books for Young Readers.** Maria tries on her mother's wedding ring while helping make tamales for a Christmas family get-together. Panic ensues when hours later, she realizes the ring is missing.

59) I Speak English for My Mom: **Stanek, Muriel (1989)**. *I Speak English for My Mom*. **New York: Albert Whitman**. Lupe, a young Mexican American, must translate for her mother who speaks only Spanish until Mrs. Gomez decides to learn English in order to get a better job.

## Observations of A Second Language Learner During My Pre-service Teaching

### Experience

I am working with Erin. She is a 3<sup>rd</sup> grader who came to America at the beginning of the school year. She speaks and writes Hebrew.

#### Late August/Early September

At the very beginning of the school year, Erin's parents would come to the classroom at different times of the day. Although it did seem to help her academically (they would translate the work for her). After a few weeks, she seemed to resent their presence, and she would tell them that she wanted to do it by herself. I felt that her parents presence in the classroom seemed to intimidate the children from approaching her.

#### Early September

We began to work on a picture dictionary to teach Erin vocabulary words. She seems to enjoy writing the words more than drawing the pictures. In the beginning, I had her learn some vocabulary words for items you would find in school. Once she mastered those words, I began to let her show me pictures of words that she would like to learn in English.

9-12-05

While the kids took their spelling test I worked with Erin. We are creating a picture dictionary with words in English and Hebrew.

She seems to be doing a better job with pronunciation of words. Also, she seems to be organizing her pictures by category now which isn't something she was doing in the beginning. Also, she likes choosing her own words for the dictionary.

### Mid to Late September

I have noticed that Erin will never eat any of the food that the teacher or other students bring in for treats. I believe this is a sign of her comfort level in the classroom. In order for her to eat unfamiliar foods, she must have complete trust in the person who is providing it.

9-27-05

I had Erin read aloud to me today. We read The Sneetches by Dr. Seuss. I asked her comprehension questions after each page. She was able to answer both questions in which the answers were found in the text and questions that required her to make connections to her own life. She seemed to be able to pronounce most of the words. The pictures seemed to help her make meaning of the story. She would ask me to explain the things she didn't understand.

She seems very eager to learn the language and seems to benefit from seeing the picture as well as the Hebrew word for an item. It might be time to start working on sentences as she seems to have gotten a bit bored from only learning vocabulary words.

## October

Although Erin still greets me warmly every time she sees me, she no longer seems to depend on adult interaction to make her feel safe. The approval of her peers has become increasingly important to her. I believe she has learned much of the English language by interacting with her friends and hearing the language spoken in context. She is becoming very social, and at times, the teacher even has to reprimand her for being too social!

10-17-05

I worked on reading with Erin on reading. She was reading some short stories (3 paragraphs) and answering simple questions (fill-in-the blank, sequencing, and multiple choice). She understands the content but she was unable to sequence the events in the story correctly. She is beginning to be able to spell phonetically. I also noticed that she is able to add very complex numbers, but she struggles with some math problems because she doesn't understand the directions.

I think she is beginning to hear the difference between English and Hebrew sounds. She is starting to grow bored with simple tasks. She seems very proud of herself whenever she can understand something without help.

10-31-05

I have noticed that Erin can now spell English words just by hearing the word spoken aloud. In the past she had to see the picture or hear the Hebrew word to know what the English word was.

11-1-05

Erin is starting to be able to read some books in English independently. I suspect that this is because she is making meaning from the illustrations.

11-8-05

I read with Erin today. We read Clifford's Tummy Trouble. She understood without any help that Clifford is big, so he can't eat as little as the other dogs. I noticed that she will always ask if there is vocabulary that she doesn't understand. She is able to retell an event in her own words. She is also able to understand implied meaning now. I think this student is progressing so rapidly because she puts a lot of effort on herself to learn the language independently. I think she is anxious to be accepted by her peers and feels that knowing the language will help her to do so.

11-14-05

I did a patterning activity with the class today. I read them a story called Q is for Duck. This is an alphabet guessing game. I then had each student take one letter from the alphabet and create their own riddle. Erin said, "O and A is for monkey because money side (says) o-o and a-a." I think this is evidence of her growing phonemic awareness of the English language.

11-22-05

I had Erin read to me today. I have noticed that she really likes to read Dr. Seuss books. She is really beginning to develop fluency and expression. She is also very good at figuring out what the author doesn't tell you. She is also good at noticing that homonyms (like no and know) are pronounced the same but mean different things. She will use the pictures to figure out what a word is if she is unsure of the meaning.



She is very good at using the pictures to make hypotheses. She asks questions when she is unsure of something. She will notice the differences in tenses but doesn't realize that they are the same word.

I think she likes Dr. Seuss so much because since so many of the words are nonsense words she can rely on her strong phonemic awareness. I think she relied on pictures to teach herself English. I feel she has made a tremendous amount of progress because she has such a strong sense of responsibility for her own learning. Also, she brings a lot of prior content knowledge to the classroom.