

Chapter 2

The Essentials and Foundations of Multicultural Children's Literature

The term *multicultural* evokes strong feelings in people. Signifying different things to different people, this term has generated considerable controversy ever since it has been in use. In fact, the term multicultural, when used in conjunction with children's literature, has, in recent years, generated much debate amongst educators and multicultural theorists around topics that go deeper into cultural, sociopolitical issues and political correctness. Fifty years ago, a book such as Ezra Jack Keats's *The Snowy Day* (1962), about a young boy enjoying a day out in the snow, was welcomed as it depicted a Black character in a positive light, where there were none. Today, the same book may bring up questions of tokenism. Across fields, theorists are asking who has the right to write about certain issues or ethnicities. Who has the experience to authentically depict certain topics? What may or may not be included in these stories and based on whose experiences?

Multicultural children's literature can be situated in multiculturalism, the result of the civil rights movement, which touched many fields in an effort to give voice and equal rights to previously underrepresented people. In an interesting article, Taxel (1995) went so far as to say that there are intricate connections between political correctness and multiculturalism in relation to children's literature. He cited convincing data to show how most attacks on political correctness are about the meanings, connotations, and applications of multiculturalism.

Although multicultural children's literature is the main focus of this chapter, the meanings and connotations of multiculturalism are also traced in order to provide a basis to understand the issues around multicultural children's literature. Possibly, one could think of multicultural children's literature in terms of degrees, that in today's climate of being politically correct, of being inclusive and of being **culturally**

conscious, there are degrees to which a literary piece may be multicultural. This degree depends upon various factors such as issues of representation, issues of cultural authenticity, range of experiences depicted, and so on. Although these factors may fill a book themselves, in this chapter they are discussed as they pertain to children's literature, beginning with a brief historical overview of multiculturalism followed by a discussion specifically of multicultural children's literature as it evolved and is understood today.

TRACING A BRIEF HISTORY OF MULTICULTURALISM

Multiculturalism began with a motive toward **cultural pluralism**, a way to recognize cultures and ethnicities not of the mainstream, beginning with ethnic studies (Banks & Banks, 2001). The term multicultural has been used as a qualifier for many things in an effort to show inclusivity in some form. Therefore, this word prefaces many words, such as multicultural issues, multicultural education, multicultural books, multicultural marketing, multicultural vision, multicultural experiences, and multicultural literature, to name a few. It has also been used as an action term, a beginning point to fight for one's rights, to be recognized as a person; in other words, multiculturalism has been used as a means to social justice.

The term as it is used today has its roots in the civil rights movement. Banks and Banks (2001) traced four phases of multiculturalism. The first phase began with educators incorporating the "history and cultures of ethnic minority groups," that is, ethnic studies, into school curriculum (p. 10). The second phase began when these same educators realized that merely inserting ethnic histories and cultures into the curriculum was not sufficient in changing attitudes toward ethnic minorities. In this phase, a push for equality and equity in education came about. The third phase emerged when groups who viewed themselves as previously disadvantaged by the system demanded that their histories and cultures also be included in multicultural education. In this phase, experiences of disabled people, experiences of gays and lesbians, experiences unique to women, and so on, began to be included. Finally, the current and fourth phase of multiculturalism is the "development of theory, research and practice that interrelate variables connected to race, class and gender" (p. 11). See Figure 2.1 for a visual representation of these phases.

As the meanings associated with the word multiculturalism were used across fields, so also in children's literature, we began to see a consciousness that multiculturalism in children's books needed to be depicted in terms of books for and about different ethnicities, for and about different experiences and histories.

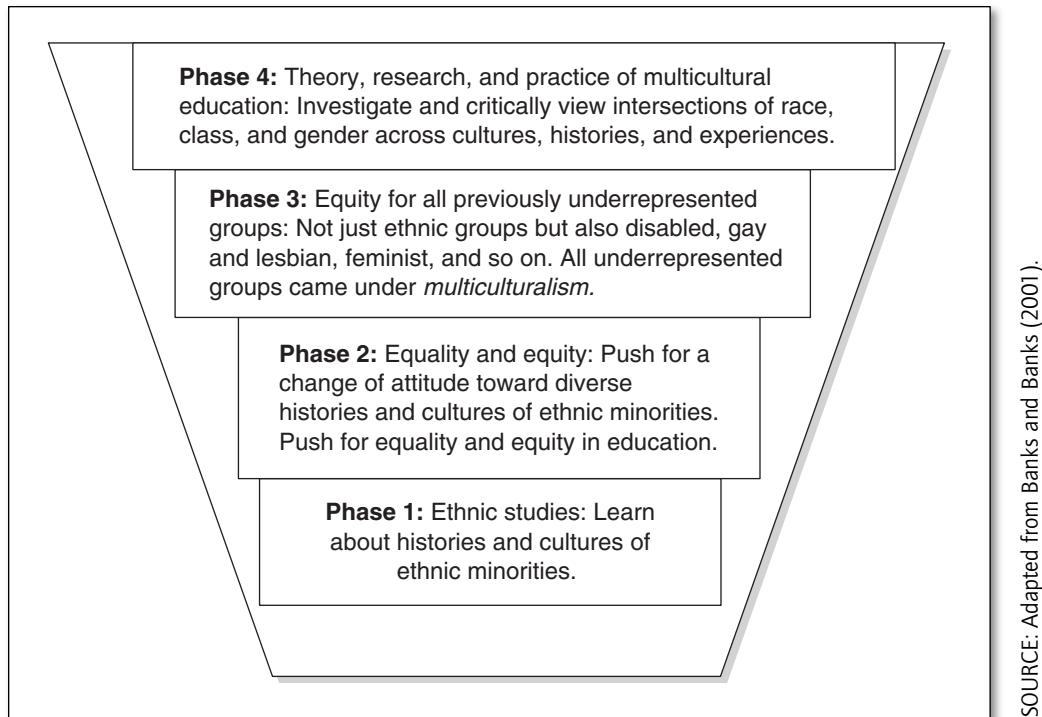


Figure 2.1 The Four Phases of Multiculturalism as They Formed Over the Years

MULTICULTURALISM TO MULTICULTURAL CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Sims Bishop (2007) called the advent of multiculturalism and the multicultural education movement “one of the most hopeful developments in children’s literature” (p. xiv). In terms of children’s literature, the term multicultural has come to signify the inclusion of literature of underrepresented groups in classrooms “with a view to promoting appreciation and respect for diversity” (Sims Bishop, 2007, p. xiv) and an affirmation for children who may not have seen themselves in positive depictions in books for children.

Following the phases of multicultural education through the years, some of the first books that could be considered multicultural children’s literature depicted different cultures and ethnicities in the illustrations and the content, simply for the sake of bringing ethnically and racially underrepresented characters into books. For example, the stories may be folktales of Native American tribes or they may depict

an African American child having a fun day out or an Asian folktale and so on. Subsequently, some educators characterize children's literature according to race and ethnicity, dividing it according to the five major ethnic groups present in the United States (i.e., African American, American Indian or Native American, Asian and Asian American, Hispanic or Latino/a, and Middle Eastern). This characterization may leave out biracial or multilingual children and children of different classes and gender, and more importantly, it does not recognize the diversity in each of these major groups. For example, Hispanic is an umbrella term for Latino/a, Chicano/a, and many other groups whose experiences are distinctly different. And in fact, *Hispanic* is a term created in the United States to depict people from a large and diverse group of peoples (Spring, 2008). Therefore, over the years it has become important to take a more inclusive view not only because of the complexities of defining a race or ethnicity and its historical experiences, but also because one of the major aims of multicultural children's literature is to depict the lives of all previously underrepresented groups. As Cai (1998) noted,

Multiculturalism is about diversity and inclusion, but what is more important, it is also about power structures and struggle. Its goal is not just to understand, accept, and appreciate cultural differences but also to ultimately transform the existing social order to ensure greater voice and authority to the marginalized cultures, and to achieve social equality and justice. (p. 313)

As such, multicultural children's literature needs to be viewed and analyzed from a sociohistorical point of view, as arising from the social, historical, and cultural contexts of the 20th century and all the controversies and struggles of that time. Although multicultural children's literature began in the 20th century, in the 21st century, it is also imperative to note that it affects everyone regardless of race, class, and gender, as conceptually the stories are located in the struggles of the people.

Evolution of Multicultural Children's Literature

There is little evidence and much difference of opinion as to when multicultural children's literature first began to make its appearance in classrooms and in the vast field of children's literature. Although some ascribe books published in the 16th century as multicultural literature (Norton & Norton, 2003), others acknowledge only those published in the last couple of decades (Au, 1993). As with any widely discussed topic that affects large groups of people, there are bound to be differences of opinion, as the naming process reveals the underlying perspective on which it is defined. As Cai (1998) rightly put it, trying to define multicultural literature is not

simply “bickering over terminology in the ivory tower of academia” as “we should not underestimate the power of naming” (p. 311). Similarly, there are differences of opinion in terms of content too; while some would include only those books that are published by and about different ethnicities living within the United States, others include international literature or literature about children in other countries or experiences written only by authors of that culture or ethnicity. There are also considerable differences of opinion within ethnic groups themselves as to the beginning of multicultural children's literature.

As mentioned before, it is important to couch this evolution in a historical perspective, keeping in mind the social and cultural times in which multicultural children's literature first began to appear. Some literary works gained importance because of the purpose they served in particular historical time periods in relation to particular ethnic and cultural groups and their struggles to gain equality and recognition, although ultimately, these stories affect everyone. For example, Sims Bishop (2007) located the beginning of African American children's literature in the “Black people's struggles for liberation, literacy and survival” (p. 1) well before the 1900s in slave songs and oral tales, particularly mentioning Frederick Douglass, a man born into slavery and later freed, who wrote his autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave* (1845). Flor Ada (2003) traced the beginning of Latino literature to the late 19th century with Cuban writer Jose Marti and to a journal called *Le Edad de Oro* (The Golden Age, also cited in Kiefer, Hepler, & Hickman, 2007). However, it would be approximately another 75 years before more literature about the experiences of these ethnic groups began to appear and be validated with recognition like the Pura Belpré Awards.

Before and After the Civil Rights Movement

Although many educators and theorists credit the civil rights movement in the mid-part of the 20th century as the beginning of an awareness that multiple perspectives need to be depicted in children's books, in reality there were many people who had already felt the need for these and had made huge strides in this direction. For example, in the 1920s, African American poets, storytellers, and artists, like Langston Hughes, Arna Bontemps, and Zora Neale Hurston, published exemplary works for children and adults alike (Kiefer et al., 2007; Sims Bishop, 2007). However, it was not until a widely publicized article in *The Saturday Review of Books* specifically on this topic written in 1965 that really sparked people's attention to the extent of the lack of multicultural children's literature. Cited in most texts and works on multicultural literature, Nancy Larrick's “The All White World of Children's Books” (1965) has become an iconic piece of writing that sparked a flurry of activity in the years immediately following it. Of special mention are two significant

groups that formed, which helped to further bring multicultural children's literature to the fore: the Council on Interracial Books for Children, founded in 1965 (as cited in Kiefer et al., 2007, although Temple, Martinez, Yokota, & Naylor, 2006, say it started in 1966), and the Coretta Scott King Award, established for authors and illustrators of African American and Black descent in 1972. The Council on Interracial Books for Children, although no longer in service, has produced some excellent guidelines on multicultural children's literature, including the pamphlet "10 Quick Ways to Analyze Children's Books for Racism and Sexism" (although the original brochure is not available, see an adaptation at <http://www.chil-es.org/10ways.pdf>). The organization also has worked with many government bodies to create awareness about multiculturalism specifically in books and texts that children read.

Although the 1960s and 1970s saw some progress in creating awareness and encouraging more authors to write books about different ethnicities and experiences, there was a lull again until the 1990s in terms of quality multicultural children's literature. During the lull, although books were being published about children from diverse backgrounds and of people from different experiences, these seemed to reiterate many of the stereotypical depictions, giving rise to unrest about the authenticity of these stories and experiences. The 1990s saw a number of criticism works that questioned issues of cultural authenticity in children's books being published. In particular, Native American groups and tribes began to not only question the cultural authenticity of these works, but they also protested against the "stealing of their stories" that began to be depicted from a mainstream perspective. In this regard, in 1990, an organization called Oyate was formed of people from various native tribes and groups. It began its operation to "see that our lives and histories are portrayed honestly, and so that all people will know our stories belong to us" (see "About Us" at <http://www.oyate.org/>). An exemplary resource, this Web site offers commentary, resources, workshops, booklists, and much more. Self-professed as a very small organization of a lot of friends, this group has brought out two very influential works in the last two decades: *Through Indian Eyes: The Native Experience in Books for Children* (Seale & Slapin, 2006) and *A Broken Flute: The Native Experience in Books for Children* (Seale & Slapin, 2005), both exhaustive edited book reviews and essays by native people of many tribes.

MULTICULTURAL CHILDREN'S LITERATURE AND LEVELS OF MULTICULTURALISM

As the word multicultural began with the multicultural education movement, many of the meanings and connotations of this category of literature go hand in hand with its applicability and usability in classrooms today. Going from the basic premise

that this body of literature should be reflective of the diverse experiences and histories of children in schools and classrooms all over the United States, it would be useful to also mention the level to which multiculturalism needs to permeate school curriculum.

Earlier, in the introduction to this chapter, it was mentioned that multicultural children's literature is defined in terms of degrees of multiculturalism. This definition has evolved from the four levels of multicultural education that James Banks so efficiently described in the late 1980s. A brief recap of these levels will help to clarify and couch the definition. In the following section, each level is explained according to multiculturalism and then related to multicultural children's literature.

Level 1: In the first and lowest level of approaching curricular reform in multicultural education is the *contributions* approach (Banks, 1999). In terms of multicultural children's literature, it may also be called the *tourist approach* or a *food and festivals approach*, where books of different cultures are introduced on certain holidays and months, giving a sense of visiting different cultures and ethnicities. In this approach, one is least committed and a superficial effort is made to include literature about heroes, holidays, celebrations, and festivals representative of the culture depicted. The literature itself may not have been evaluated for authenticity and representation. Although this approach is an excellent way to introduce a body of literature to a class that is unaware of this group, it may not suffice. Some examples are cooking salsa and eating tortillas when reading Gary Paulsen's, *The Tortilla Factory* (1995). *The Tortilla Factory* is a picture book written in simple evocative poetry and narrates the cycle of how a kernel of corn becomes a tortilla.

Level 2: The next level is the *additive* approach, where content is added without changing or evaluating the basic structure. In terms of multicultural children's literature, it may involve reading folktales from around the world that are representative of a class's demographic, bringing in guest speakers or authors representative of certain cultures to talk about certain practices, and so on. Although slightly better, no interaction as to questioning historical facts or critically engaging with literature may be possible as there are no structural changes that have been made. For example, students might read *Lights for Gita* (2000), by Rachna Gilmore, a story of a young girl celebrating Diwali, the Indian festival of lights, as a new immigrant to the United States, and then watch a guest demonstrate wearing a sari and eat some Indian sweets. Although this demonstration gives students a nice introduction, a first-person account of what Diwali is like, and allows for interaction with a person of the culture, it remains a "visit" to an exotic land.

In the busy lives of many teachers, these two approaches may be the easiest to begin with, as they don't need much planning or structural or curricular changes. Many classrooms still follow these approaches, which is evident in the monthly celebrations of "Black History Month," when everyone reads about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., or "Asian Appreciation Month," when stories and folktales of Asian origin are read.

Level 3: The third level or the *transformation* approach turns the fundamental curriculum around in that it helps “students view concepts, issues, events and themes from the perspective of diverse ethnic and cultural groups” (Banks, 1999, p. 31). From a multicultural children’s literature point of view, in such an approach, students are given literature that is “against the grain,” that gives a point of view of historical events not only from the mainstream perspective but also from the perspective of the affected parties. In such an approach, children are given the opportunity to see different perspectives of many parties involved toward an attempt at an Anti-Bias and equitable education.

For example, *1621: A New Look at Thanksgiving* (2001), by Margaret Bruchac and Catherine O’Neill Grace, gives a perspective of thanksgiving from the native point of view. *Harvesting Hope: The Story of Cesar Chavez* (2003), by Kathleen Krull, gives a brief biography of the farmworkers’ union leader Chavez, who worked tirelessly to pave the way for migrant and farmworkers’ rights. *Voices From the Fields: Children of Migrant Farmworkers Tell Their Stories* (2000), by Beth Atkin, are firsthand accounts of children who have lead the hard life of migrant workers,. *The Circuit* and *Breaking Through*, by Francisco Jimenez, are autobiographical tales of Dr. Jimenez, who is now professor of Modern Languages and Literature at Santa Clara University. These give authentic and appropriate accounts from an insider’s perspective, creating opportunities for rich discussions.

Level 4: The fourth and most desirable level of multiculturalism is the *social action* approach or an approach that involves students in not only the curriculum but also in social action, in speaking out against injustice, in engaging with power structures to take active action to modify and transform society toward a more equitable and just life. Although these seem like tall orders for young classrooms, this approach is more than ever before necessary at all levels of society if we as teachers want our students to become responsible and critically aware people of tomorrow.

In terms of multicultural children’s literature, this may be accomplished by reading real accounts of famous historical events and applying the knowledge to current events by taking action through the media, the Internet, and in the community, or to connect an everyday occurrence to issues in the real world. For example, when we buy a soft toy and see the “made in China” label on it, we hardly think about child labor laws. But a book such as Sally Grindley’s, *Spilled Water* (2004), gives us an account in the first person about the extreme conditions and unimaginable hardships that Lu Si-Yan, a 11-year-old Chinese girl, faces as she is sold down the river by her uncle after her father’s death. For the next 3 years, Lu Si-Yan is alone, fending for herself finding work in the big cities until she comes to a factory that makes toys for export. She is hired at first to stitch eyes on cute soft bears and later to be a “runner,” delivering parts of toy trucks that are completed to the next person in the assembly line. Enduring extremely long hours with no rest, Lu Si-Yan manages to “race, race, race” (p. 194) for 3 months, working from dawn to midnight until

she completely collapses one day. Are there relationships between this poignant tale of poverty and helplessness and the demands for cheap toys in Western countries? What can children do in helping other children across the world? Perhaps children can do something small, like writing letters to corporations who inadvertently support child labor in poorer countries. These may be some questions that could be raised and discussed in classrooms along with taking deliberate action through a class project.

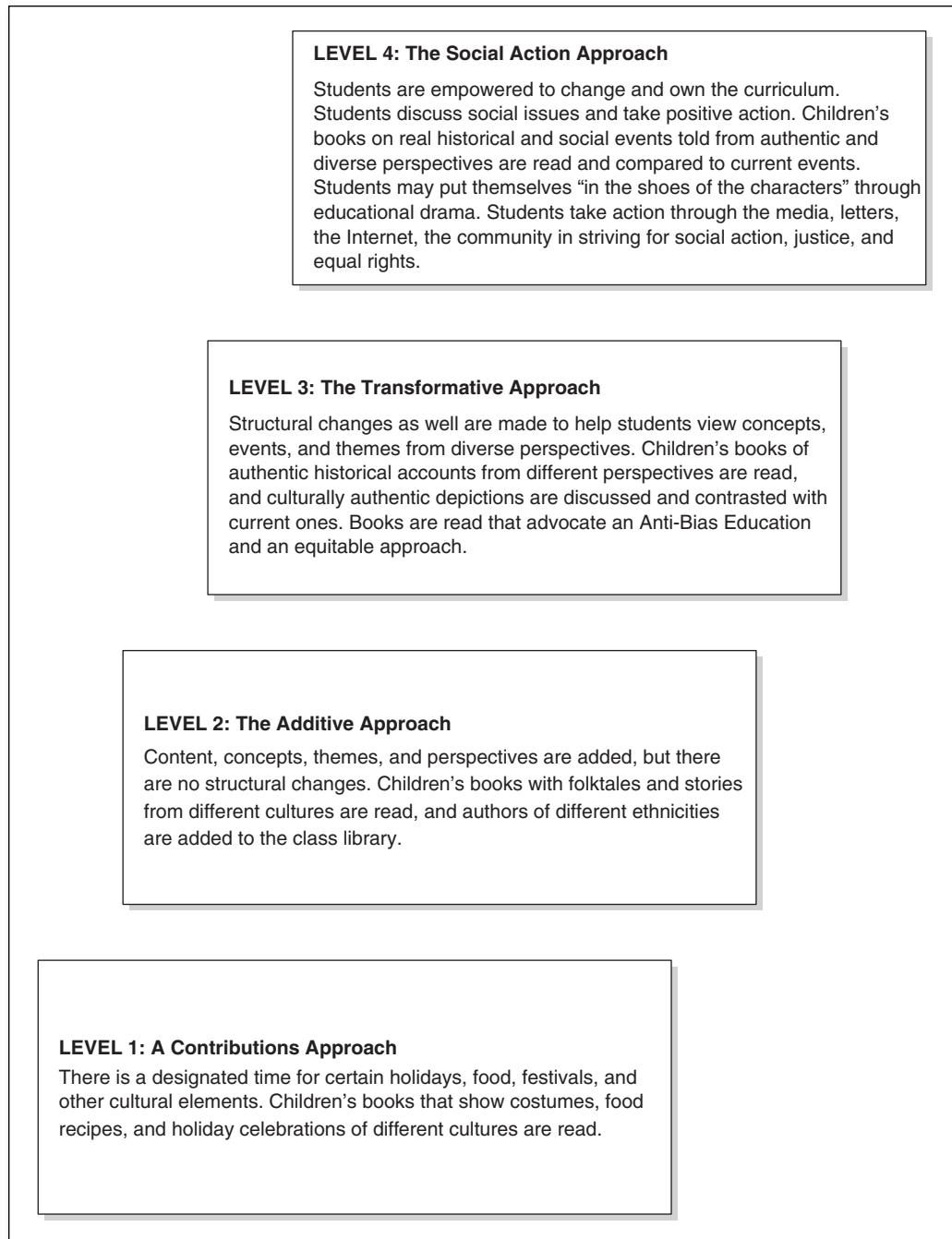
To recap, the four levels of multiculturalism starting from the lowest level are a contributions approach, an additive approach, a transformative approach, and the social action approach. See Figure 2.2 for a visual representation of these.

DEFINING MULTICULTURAL CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Multicultural children's literature is defined in this book as literature that is by and about diverse populations and includes different perspectives. This definition has evolved from the aforementioned approaches and many other interpretations and connotations of the word multicultural. Specifically, multicultural children's literature validates all sociocultural experiences, including those occurring because of language, race, gender, class, ethnicity, and ability. Although this is a broad view of multicultural children's literature, I qualify this definition and further explain it with an extension of Sims Bishop's (1982) definitions of socially conscious, culturally conscious, and melting pot books, by extending them to all multicultural children's literature. Although there are no hard and fast rules to signify these terms, a useful construction may be to look at what these terms meant in the past and then adapt and apply them when analyzing books written for children today.

Melting Pot Books

Generally speaking, the term *melting pot* has come to signify a fusion of many cultures, ethnicities, and experiences. In reaction to the multicultural movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s, this term was most commonly used to connote the cultural assimilation of the various peoples into one country. Similarly, books about diverse cultures and experiences were based on showing fusion or cultural assimilation, showing that all people are the same eventually, that we must not discriminate based on cultural and ethnic differences. The idea here is that everyone has similar experiences at some levels. It is a way to show the "normalcy" that existed in all people despite their color and cultural differences. Such books have been variously called *culturally generic* (Temple et al., 2006) or *universally themed* (Thompson,



SOURCE: Adapted from Banks and Banks (2001).

Figure 2.2 Levels of Multiculturalism Relating to Multicultural Children's Books

1995) and come from the stance of defining multicultural as multiple + cultures (Cai, 1998). For example, on the cover of Eve Bunting's *The Flower Garden* (1994) is a small girl's smiling face, shown among tulips and other flowers. It is very hard to make out the race or ethnicity of the girl, although on the cover and in the illustrations inside she is shown as brown skinned. The content of the story does not give us any clues, either, as it shows her living in an apartment in an urban city, traveling by bus, and buying potted flowers as a birthday surprise for her mother. Illustrated vibrantly by Kathryn Hewitt, this book is a good example of what could be termed melting pot or marginally multicultural. It is multicultural only because it talks about the universal experience (getting a surprise birthday present) of a girl living in an urban apartment complex who does not have a car but travels by public transportation. In fact, one could go so far as to say that except for the token color of the picture showing the girl as brown skinned, one cannot distinguish this book from any other mainstream books; in other words, it shows the universality of the human condition, thereby fitting into a melting pot category. So what warrants this book's inclusion (however marginal) under multicultural children's literature? The only reason is that it shows a child in an urban locality with an urban lifestyle. Going back to the aforementioned definition, all sociocultural experiences are validated, including those of class. Most books in many classrooms would fall into this category of melting pot books, showing the universality and being marginally multicultural, taking a contributions or additive approach. As mentioned before, these books are easy to come by as they do not create controversy or need much preplanning to introduce to a classroom, and they can easily be incorporated as a beginning to a larger unit. Many of Eve Bunting's books fall into this category and make great beginning books to larger units. For example, *A Day's Work* is a good introductory book about the hard-working day laborers who are forced to find menial work in a new country. This is the story of a 7-year-old boy who helps his grandfather find work as a day laborer in California by translating for him. In the process, he learns a valuable lesson of honesty from his grandfather.

Socially Conscious Books

Socially conscious books, according to Sims Bishop (2007), are about introducing one cultural group and its unique experiences to the mainstream in a way to educate or make "socially conscious" the trials and tribulations of that group to the larger group. Their main purpose "seemed to engender empathy and sympathy . . . to promote tolerance for racial desegregation or integration" (Sims Bishop, 2007, p. 61). This seems to be a unique characterization which I would like to change slightly to encompass all groups; in other words, I would like to say that socially conscious books may be those books that depict a social issue that makes us more "empathetic and

sympathetic” toward a group that has come together as a people on the grounds of having a common social experience such as poverty, war, urban experiences, and so on. As such, socially conscious books are also culturally generic in the sense that they may include or be about people from any background, color, race, or ethnicity, but by experiencing similar social occurrences or events that are unique to their groups, they become multicultural. Some examples are as follows: *Allison* (1997), by Allen Say, is about a Japanese girl adopted by a White family who discovers that she doesn’t look like her parents and learns about adoption. *The Wall* (1992), by Eve Bunting, is about a father and son searching for his grandfather’s name on the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C. *Fly Away Home* (1993), also by Eve Bunting, is about a homeless family struggling to make ends meet and living in an airport. These books still fall into the additive approach; however, the experiences of this group of people help us empathize with and therefore transform our ideas about them. These would loosely correspond with Levels 2 and 3 of multiculturalism.

Culturally Conscious Books

Culturally conscious books, according to Sims Bishop (1982), are those that depict the cultural traditions, languages, and ethnicities of certain groups’ experiences in an authentic voice, most often from an insider’s perspective. Also termed *culturally specific* (Temple et al., 2006), books under this category talk about specific nuances and experiences that may not appear universally. At first glance, one may say that these are the books that are the most multicultural, in that they talk specifically about cultural aspects that are unique to certain groups, thereby giving us a glimpse into the lives of people who are from this group. Some examples include *Grandfather’s Journey* (1993), *Tea with Milk* (1999), and *Tree of Cranes* (1991), all by Allen Say, a series of biographical tales about his grandfather, mother, and himself, respectively. *Grandfather’s Journey* is a poignant tale of Say’s grandfather’s journey to California, where he settles to have a family. After a time he misses his land back in Japan and goes back for a visit, but when he wants to come back to California, World War II starts and “scattered our lives like leaves in a storm.” Say’s grandfather never comes back, but his daughter, Say’s mother, was born and raised in San Francisco, and *Tea with Milk* is her story of growing up in Japan. *Tree of Cranes* depicts how Say’s mother shows him the tradition of making and decorating a Christmas tree when he was growing up in Japan. These three books show the unique perspective of immigrants comfortable in two countries; in fact, “when I am in one country I miss the other,” wrote Say, capturing aptly the feelings of many immigrants.

Neeny Coming, Neeny Going (1997), by Karen English, a Coretta Scott King Honor book, is a tale of changing times on Daufuskie Island off the coast of South Carolina. Told in the melodic language that follows the island dialect, it is the story

of Essie, whose cousin Neeny comes to visit from the mainland. Although it may not have been a conscious choice, uniquely, nowhere in the book do we see the color White even as a backdrop for words on the page; rather the book is illustrated with vibrant colors of reds, yellows, browns, and blues. Other examples include *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, by Mildred D. Taylor. This is one of a series of riveting historical fiction books about four African American siblings caught in the tumultuous times of the Depression Era. *Esperanza Rising*, by Pam Muñoz Ryan, is loosely based on her grandmother's experiences and is told through the voice of Esperanza Ortega, a rich Mexican girl who moves to California as a migrant farmworker after losing everything due to her father's murder by bandits. *Baseball Saved Us* (1995), by Ken Mochizuki, is a heartwarming tale of survival from the point of view of a young boy who is of Japanese descent interned during World War II and how his father began a baseball team at the camp. As these are unique experiences, the stories give us specific insights from an insider's point of view that is not there in other books, helping us engage culturally with this group.

To reiterate the idea of "degrees of multiculturalness," books that may be put under the criteria of melting pot books are on the border of multicultural literature. They are only multicultural insofar as giving outsider, universalist perspectives that may show differences in class, personal experiences, and points of view in the content. The resolution of the story is often one that celebrates sameness as opposed to uniqueness. These books do not engage us in critical dialogue about the content. Books that may be put under the criteria of socially conscious are those that make us aware of social issues but may also be from an outsider's perspective and may not resolve the issue within the story. Although they may engage us in critical dialogue, these are more of a universal nature, for the larger good of the society. Culturally conscious books are insider perspectives that really teach us about specific nuances of cultural conflict that help us engage in critical dialogue in order to question larger power relations.

THE NEED FOR MULTICULTURAL CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Other than the overwhelming statistics that show the need for multicultural children's literature, because of the diversity of students in classrooms today, which has been cited regularly in countless texts, magazines, and articles, there are deep connections between what happens inside the classrooms and what happens in the real world. In a time when the world is growing technologically smaller in terms of being accessible through the Internet, it is no longer a choice for classrooms to adopt a multicultural view, if there ever was a choice, because "the world outside the classroom transacts daily with the world inside the classroom and each reflects, shapes and is shaped by the other" (Fecho & Allen, 2003, p. 233). This means that racism,

sexism, classism, and many other “isms” are apparent in the classrooms of today, but they “don’t get discussed in complicated ways in many classrooms” (Fecho & Allen, 2003, p. 233). Multicultural children’s literature, especially authentic accounts from an insider’s perspective, offers multiple ways of intersecting with students’ experiences and their learning. To borrow a sentence from Fecho and Allen (2003), although these authors are not writing about children’s literature, “too few educators . . . have considered the ways students’ experiences—e.g., cultural identity, socioeconomic circumstances, family language and culture, political issues, religion—transact with their efforts and opportunities to learn” (p. 233). It is because of this that there is an urgent need for multicultural children’s literature to permeate the curriculum in schools, for genuine accounts that address many of these issues from an insider’s point of view, to give children a way to validate their feelings and experiences; to create understanding, empathy, and tolerance; to break debilitating stereotypes; to give equal voice and representation. In this section, two important aspects of the need for multicultural children’s literature are discussed in detail: equal representation and validation, and cultural authenticity.

Equal Representation and Validation

First and foremost, multicultural children’s literature is important, as it gives equal representation and validation to countless voices that had either been silenced or did not have an opportunity to see themselves aptly represented in literature. Although the question of apt representation or cultural authenticity is still a sticky issue, there is at least hope that more works on diverse perspectives are becoming available to children of today. Educators and progressive thinkers of the early 20th century also felt the same and were some of the first to set the stage for equal representation. In the next few paragraphs, a brief history of the fight for equal representation and validation in books for children is traced.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, under the section on tracing a brief history, it is not until the early part of the 20th century that nonmainstream works for children began to appear as a reaction to extreme stereotyping, gross misrepresentations, and skewed stories that were written from a White perspective. Some of these first works appeared from the African American community, which pioneered the pathways for those of other cultures to make their voices heard. One of the earliest is *The Brownies’ Book* (1920–1921). A monthly magazine and the brainchild of W. E. B. Du Bois, it was the result of a number of “social and political circumstances” (Sims Bishop, 2007, p. 21). Its goal, as DuBois envisioned it, was to show Black children as normal and beautiful, to showcase their achievements and history from an authentic point of view, and foremost to help them see themselves in books as they were and not as someone

else envisioned them. There were ample “poems, stories, biographical sketches, illustrations, photographs, and a number of featured columns” (Sims Bishop, 2007, p. 25). Along with Jessie Fauset and Augustus Dill, 24 issues of the *Brownies Book* magazine ran successfully to counter the debilitating stereotypes that were, until then (and later), rampant in stories such as *Little Black Sambo*. The *Brownies Book* magazine was published specifically for “The Children of the Sun . . . Designed for All Children, But Especially for *Ours*” (emphasis in text; January 1920, cover page; retrieved on May 12, 2008, from the Rare Books and Special Collections Division of the Library of Congress Digital Collections: <http://www.loc.gov/library/libarch-digital.html>). The cover page also says “it will seek to teach Universal Love and Brotherhood for all little folk, black and brown and yellow and white” (January 1920, cover page 2; also cited in Sims Bishop, 2007, p. 23). As can be seen by this quote, the aim was to reach out to all children, setting the stage for multicultural children's literature (Sims Bishop, 2007) and to validate children's experiences as they were. Until then, most children's books and magazines, like the *St. Nicholas Magazine* started in 1872, showed Black characters only as either comic relief or as less intelligent. As for other ethnicities, they were mostly nonexistent or shown as “uncivilized savages” that needed to be put on the right path.

With the help of the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) and the vision of DuBois, *The Brownies' Book* created a short but legendary respite for Black children. However, things were only getting worse for children from many Native American or American Indian tribes. Many schools around the United States and Canada, the most famous being The Carlisle Indian Industrial School started by Richard Henry Pratt, were rampantly forcing horrific changes on children ages 6 to 15. These children were systematically forced to be at these schools. They were sometimes kidnapped and forced to forget their languages, ways of living, eating, thinking, and so forth, in order to “become civilized.” Validation had no meaning in these schools, with extreme corporal punishments for mere infractions of speaking their own language or even not knowing what was being said (Seale & Slapin, 2005). Authentic accounts of their stories were not even told until 70 or 80 years later, and most of these accounts have been found to be unauthentic, grossly underplaying or changing facts or fabricating points to give a watered-down version of their stories. Many of these are widely endorsed and circulated, reemphasizing many of the rampant stereotypes about native tribes. Examples include *My Heart Is on the Ground: The Diary of Nannie Little Rose, a Sioux Girl* (1999), by Ann Rinaldi, and *The Ledgerbook of Thomas Blue Eagle* (1994), by Grutman and Matthaui, titles that even those of us deeply concerned with multicultural issues are confused by because of the manner in which these stories are couched in “historical facts.” These two books talk of the infamous schooling practices mentioned earlier. However, it is not to say that these should not be read;

rather these stories will serve as good beginning points and as books to compare to the authentic tales. Often the true and authentic tales are very difficult and shocking to read but the stories need to be told. Further, because of the graphic details in the authentic stories, they are not as widely publicized and as readily available. For example, *As Long as the Rivers Flow*, by Larry Loyie, a biographical tale of Loyie, who was forced to go to one of these schools, gives a first-person account that is heart-rending. *When the Rain Sings: Poems by Young Native Americans*, edited by Lee Francis (1999), is a compilation of poems by contemporary children from various native tribes. Similarly there is little written about other ethnicities that were settled in the United States like Chinese, Japanese, Mexican, and Cuban children during the early part of the 20th century. It is for these that we owe multicultural children's literature, to validate their experiences and to give equal representation.

Some works, although they are token, warrant a mention simply because there were no depictions until that point in time: Two books by Ezra Jack Keats are *The Snowy Day* (1963), which shows a Black child discovering that snow has fallen during the night, and *Pet Show* (1972), about a clever boy who takes a germ as his pet for the local pet show. Although Keats's books fall into the melting pot category, they at least began to appear in a climate where there were only White characters in books.

Cultural Authenticity

While works such as Keats's show universal themes and have a token representation of a different culture, the controversy comes about when authors tell stories about a different culture based on their imagination and perhaps only their experience and may make innocuous mistakes along the way. One has to wonder if these were innocuous mistakes or watering down or misrepresentation of the facts for motives such as authorial imagination, publishing choices, and demand. Cultural authenticity is an extremely complex issue that goes far deeper than the dichotomous insider-outsider perspectives. As Fox and Short (2003) discovered, there are as many controversies as points of view that range from the author to larger sociopolitical issues. In their excellent edited book called *Stories Matter: The Complexity of Cultural Authenticity in Children's Literature* (2003), devoted solely to this topic, they draw from authors, illustrators, educators, political theorists, to teachers in the field, covering such a wide range of topics from an author's social responsibility, authorial freedom, intentions and motivations, to the sociopolitical nature of multiculturalism, the politics of political correctness, and so on. As can be seen, this topic alone needs a book-length treatment, although in this chapter, only those aspects that are pertinent to evaluating and introducing multicultural children's literature are discussed.

So what is cultural authenticity in terms of multicultural children's literature and what does it entail? Simply, one could say that when you recognize certain aspects

of your culture as described or portrayed in a book and you find those to be true, you may feel the book is culturally authentic (Fox & Short, 2003). However, this is a view from the reader's perspective, when you read a book and find yourself and your experiences in the book. But it may not have been *written* by an author who is from that culture, or a text could be construed as authentic when the plot and setting of a time period are authentic. In other words, defining cultural authenticity could produce as many theories as reader-response theories, depending on what position you are in: author, reader, or text.

For the purposes of this chapter, it will be useful to go to the crux of the issue, that is, multiculturalism and its goals to challenge racism, and affirm pluralism and equality. Sims Bishop said that cultural authenticity is “an elusive term that carries a number of different connotations . . . it has to do with the success with which an author is able to reflect the cultural perspectives of the people about whom he or she is writing and make readers from inside the group believe that the writer knows what's going on” (Sims Bishop, 2003, p. 29). She also contended that a “close critical examination of the work can reveal the distinctive features of the body of literature thereby provide [ing] some sense of [what] culturally authentic literature” could look like (Sims Bishop, 2003, p. 30). From these definitions, we can ascertain that authenticity is determined by how close the author's perspective is to the reader's perspective. A “close critical examination” is necessary in order to make sense of multicultural children's literature's cultural authenticity, and this is discussed in detail in the next section.

Cultural Authenticity: Whose Perspective?

In terms of representation, the danger comes about when a literary work is read and “given awards” and then is discovered to have historical misrepresentation or provides only a one-sided view. For example, Walach (2008) called for a close reading of books before they are taught in schools. He analyzed why *So Far From the Bamboo Grove* (1986), by Yoko Kawashima Watkins, a semiautobiographical tale of Watkins's escape from North Korea as a child to Japan during World War II, created a controversy, especially amongst the Korean descendants in a Massachusetts school district. He found that although the book talks about the atrocities of Korean communists against Japanese, it does not acknowledge or ignores the atrocities of Japanese against Koreans during that time. Walach, therefore, cautioned that teachers need to be especially careful in providing balanced accounts of historical facts, because “despite our lack of historical expertise, schools and parents expect teachers to choose appropriate books for children and in the process discern historical fiction from historical indifference or fabrication” (Walach, 2008, p. 17).

Amongst all the issues and controversy around multicultural children's literature, cultural authenticity is the most significant because it goes to the crux of multiculturalism itself. In other words, the whole reason why there was a movement for multicultural education was to give previously silenced groups a voice to be heard. However, when these voices are again usurped and used to distort through the stories and literature, it defeats the purpose.

Insider and Outsider Perspectives

There are clearly two sides to this issue: on the one hand are those that believe that only "cultural insiders" may write about a certain culture and its stories (see <http://www.oyate.org>), and on the other hand are those that believe that "cultural outsiders" may write about their stories because no one can be fully representative of an entire culture. One person's interpretation may not agree with others in the culture, and no culture's experience is so homogenous as to have one point of view (Gates, 2003, Taxel, 2003). However, the controversy comes in when one looks at larger issues of privilege and position about whose stories get published and publicized. For example, because of the decades of systematic suppression of peoples from most of the native tribes, very few children's authors have come out to tell their stories. Further, even those stories that have come out may be censored due to their horrific truthfulness. In such a situation, what can teachers do to authentically portray native tribes? This was the dilemma that Moreillon (2003) faced when she was looking for books that her students in the Sonoran Desert could read about where the Tohono O'odham American Indians live. She found no children's books that depicted them in an authentic manner and finally wrote one, against the advice of many people. A widely accepted author such as Paul Goble, who has told many Native American tales and has won many awards for his work, is another such example. However, Oyate, the group of Native American educators from various tribes, recommends that only cultural insiders or people who belong to their tribes are qualified to tell and represent their stories. They not only reject Goble as a storyteller but also declare him negligent in trying to understand these stories from an insider's point of view, even though he claims that he has done his research well, as noted by Seale (in Seale & Slapin, 2005). This brings us to yet another aspect of cultural authenticity, that of convincing insiders that their stories are interpreted well. Sims Bishop (2007) asked writers to understand the risks and difficulties in writing about a culture that they are only superficially familiar with and called it arrogance on the part of the writers. So who has the right to tell whose stories? There are no easy answers to this question. Celebrated author Julius Lester (2004) offered this:

Multiculturalism is a two-way street. If the proponents want others to accept multiculturalism's challenge to Western cultural norms and relinquish power

and control, the proponents cannot move into what is now a power vacuum and usurp the same power they detest. (p. 122)

In other words, he said that we must be ready for others to make a story their own and tell it, and in being able to do so lies the “integrity” of multiculturalism, the “risk of living in a democracy” (Lester, 2004, p. 122). Although for the scope of this chapter suffice it to say that one needs to remember the larger principles of multicultural children's literature and draw upon criteria to evaluate children's literature so that one may not get caught up in the quagmire of these controversies, rather one can teach children to evaluate literature from a critical point of view.

Criteria for Evaluating Multicultural Children's Literature

Consider the following points in terms of the illustrations and the content of the text.

- *Author's and Illustrator's Perspective:* Evaluate the author's and illustrator's perspective; read the pictures and text closely. Is the author portraying characters and the story line from an “insider's” perspective? In other words, do the actions of the characters seem recognizable or agreeable by people of the culture that the book portrays? An insider's perspective is not only determined by an author or illustrator's birth and ethnicity but also by the meticulous research into the culture that comes through in the complete characterizations of the characters and plot line and resolution of the story.
- *Multidimensionality:* Evaluate multidimensionality in character, setting, and plot. Are characters multidimensional? Do they have a well-rounded personality? Are they stereotyped in illustrations? Are they recognizable as being from a particular cultural group? Is the setting multidimensional in terms of showing the culture's depth and breadth? For example, African Americans may live in urban areas or in apartments; they may be upper class, well educated, and so on. Similarly, Asian women may be illiterate, or Native Americans may live in houses in a city, and so on. Is the plot and setting multidimensional, making us believe that this story could be true and realistic? Is it recognizable and not superficial?
- *Stereotyping:* Check the illustration, characterization, and story resolution for possible stereotypes. Are illustrations token ones? Do they have recognizable real features of the culture or people depicted? Do the characters have unique characteristics that are not caricatures or stereotypes? Is the story resolved in a realistic manner?
- *Authentic Language:* Is the language spoken by the characters authentic? Is the language in which characters are depicted and the story line that is developed devoid of negative and derogatory connotations? Are words “loaded,” that is, filled with negative or stereotypical connotations?

See also *10 Quick Ways to Analyze Children's Books for Racism and Sexism*. Adapted version available at <http://www.chil-es.org/10ways.pdf>.

CONCLUSION

The push for multiculturalism is perhaps the most important need of the times, especially in a country such as the United States of America, where there are people from practically every part of the globe (Lester, 2004). As we become smaller in terms of connectivity through the Internet, and we become bigger in terms of reach, our work as teachers becomes more complicated by the day. It is no longer a question of including materials reflecting a classroom's population; rather it has become imperative to learn about one another, to challenge ourselves, to question our assumptions, to relinquish power, to "see" history from many different points of view, and to become sensitized to the untold stories. Further, it is no consolation that we are doing this in a climate of uncertainty about what multiculturalism is. Renowned author Julius Lester (2004) rightly stated this:

Let's be honest. None of us has a good idea what multiculturalism is. We in America are attempting something that has never been attempted in world history. We have created a nation that has a population that includes people from practically every country on the globe, and the grand adventure of the twenty-first century is figuring out how we can all live together while simultaneously cherishing and sharing the unique customs and ways of our particular groups.

As we grapple with challenges humans have not grappled with before, it is all right to be confused . . . if we are agreed that what we want in our lives and thus our literature, is the inclusion of as wide a variety of the human experience as possible. (p. 122)

Lester's idea of including a wide variety of human experiences in order to represent as many people as possible seems easy enough, although as we discussed in this chapter, there are several nuances to this important topic, including striving for a level of multiculturalism that includes social action and justice, striving for cultural authenticity and equal representation, and evaluating books to fit into a curriculum that is culturally responsive.

It is heartening to know that there are already several teachers whose classrooms strive for a **culturally responsive approach** following an **anti-bias curriculum**, yet we have much work to do as the meanings and connotations of multiculturalism evolve in the 21st century.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR THE TEACHER

1. What criteria can I use to define multicultural children's literature?
2. What criteria can I use to choose authentic and quality multicultural books in my classroom?

3. What do the terms melting pot, socially conscious, and culturally conscious mean in my classroom context?
4. What steps could I take to make my classroom and materials culturally conscious?
5. In what ways could I incorporate the four levels of multiculturalism into my classroom curriculum?

SAMPLE RESPONSE LESSON 2.1

Check for Authenticity

Primary Grades: In the Classroom, by Parents, Tutors, and Librarians

Duration: 1 Day

Overview

The teacher will read *The Keeping Quilt*, by Patricia Polacco, a family tale of a quilt that was passed from mother to daughter over four generations. Made from a basket of old clothes, Anna's babushka, Uncle Vladimir's shirt, Aunt Havalah's nightdress, and an apron of Aunt Natasha's become *The Keeping Quilt*, passed along from mother to daughter for almost a century. The quilt is a Sabbath tablecloth, a wedding canopy, and a blanket that welcomes babies warmly into the world told through strongly moving pictures. After the read-aloud, the teacher discusses family traditions that symbolize values and memories. The teacher will give information about Polacco's background and her immigrant story that is reflected in this book.

Or the teacher will read aloud *Grandfather's Journey*, by Allen Say, another family tale of Say's grandfather who moves to California from Japan. Eloquent yet succinct language, along with large, formal paintings in delicate, faded colors are portrayed to give the impression of a cherished and well-preserved family album. The teacher will give information about Allen Say's background and the immigrant story reflected in the book.

Materials

The Keeping Quilt by Patricia Polacco or *Grandfather's Journey* by Allen Say, poster paper, markers, colored pencils, chart paper for a compare and contrast chart, butcher paper for whole-group activity

Key Vocabulary and Terms

Traditions, Immigrant, Journeys, Perspective

(Continued)

(Continued)

Anticipatory Set

1. *Focus:* Students will discuss what they know about traditions, values, immigrants, and journeys. Perhaps they or their families are immigrants who have come on a long journey. Perhaps their grandfathers or grandmothers or aunts and uncles came as immigrants. Students discuss what traditions are. Students also learn about the authors and their backgrounds.
2. *Objective:* By the end of the lesson, students have learned about authors' perspectives. The teacher helps them come up with a list of queries to check the books for authenticity, including words, characterization, pictures, and historical information. With the help of the teacher, students may create a compare and contrast chart of the traditions in each book with those of their family members.
3. *Transfer:* As students learn about author's perspective and experiences, they will begin to recognize insider versus outsider perspectives. Students will also gain practice in reading pictures for authenticity through historical facts. This will help them gain an understanding of multidimensionality.

Instructions

1. After the read-aloud, the teacher will lead the students through a discussion of the authors' real lives and how they came to be immigrants. The teacher begins by asking students if they or their families or somebody they know may have moved here from a different country. If the teacher has an anecdotal tale, it may be nice for students to know about the teacher. The teacher needs to be open to stories and discussion, as often students may divert and talk about other journeys or vacations they have taken. A distinction should be made between vacations and an immigrant's journey.
2. The teacher could ask critical questions that lead the students to recognize insider perspectives. Have them look at the pictures in the books. Are they stereotyped or token? Are they recognizable and characteristic? The teacher may bring in actual pictures for the students to compare. Are the characters' clothes, features, and settings authentic? What kind of traditions do they recognize in the books? On a large chart, have students compare the authors' stories. The teacher should provide historical facts about the two authors and their respective stories.
3. On a poster paper, the teacher, along with the whole class, generates some guidelines on how to critically read picture books for authenticity and to determine whether they are multicultural. Suggestions include looking at the copyright date, pictures, story resolution, the author's background, and so on.

Independent Practice

After the whole-group discussion looking at the books, the teacher can have students pair together or work in small groups and look at other picture books with the guidelines that have been created as a whole class. Students could create a chart of their opinions on whether the books they looked at are multicultural and why they feel so.

Closure

The teacher could then share the opinions charts about the books that students chose and display them in the classroom.

Modifications: Secondary Grades

The same lesson may be followed but by using books such as the following: *Baseball Saved Us*, by Ken Mochizuki, which is the tale of a young Japanese boy interned along with his family during WWII and how baseball became a pastime to forget the tough times they were facing; or *Kite Runner*, by Khaled Hosseini, which is a multigenerational tale of a young boy's friendship and struggles in Afghanistan before, during, and after the Taliban rule. Older students will want to get historical facts and go deeper into the authenticity of the stories, using guidelines that are developed as a class.

SELECTED ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY**Melting Pot Books**

Bunting, E. (1994). *The flower garden*. Orlando, FL: Voyager Books.

In this simple, vibrantly illustrated picture book, a young girl goes to the store to buy her mother a surprise birthday gift of a flowering garden. Kathryn Hewitt's beautiful illustrations show the girl as she travels by bus to the store and comes back to her apartment to plant the flowers in a window pot arrangement. The illustrations suggest a possible Manhattan setting. Recommended age 0 to 4 years.

Bunting, E. (1997). *A day's work*. Boston: Sandpiper Books.

Seven-year-old Francisco waits with his grandfather as they look for daily wage work along with many others at a street corner. As his grandfather does not speak English, Francisco is there to translate. In his rush to get his "Abuelo" a job, Francisco agrees to gardening, although they do not know anything about it. In the process, he learns a valuable lesson on honesty from his grandfather. Recommended age 4 years and up.

Keats, E. J. (1962). *The snowy day*. New York: Viking Children's Books, Penguin Group.

A young boy enjoys a day out in the snow. The illustrations are done using cut paper, watercolors, and striking collages, and they show Peter as he discovers that snow has fallen overnight. This book shows Peter as a Black boy enjoying a day out in the snow. Recommended age 0 to 4 years.

Paulsen, G. (1998). *The tortilla factory*. Orlando, FL: Voyager Books.

This is the story of how a kernel of corn becomes a tortilla. Told in beautiful yet simple poetic prose, the story takes a cycle of life approach. Illustrated by beautiful paintings by Ruth Paulsen, this book is sure to become a favorite for an early childhood audience. The story line is a little simplistic, although the book can be enjoyed for its colors. Recommended age 0 to 5 years.

Socially Conscious Books

Atkin, B. (2000). *Voices from the field: Children of migrant farmworkers tell their stories*. New York: Little, Brown Young Readers.

This photographic memoir of nine families of farmworkers is a moving depiction of the struggles and living conditions that many children of farmworkers endured. The interviews are rewritten sometimes in the first person and are compiled well with photographs to make an emotional yet sensitive impact for any reader. Recommended age 8 years and up.

Bunting, E. (1990). *The wall*. New York: Clarion Books.

In this story, a young boy and his father travel to Washington, D.C., to find his grandfather's name on the "the wall," or the Vietnam War memorial. Through sensitive and stirring language, Bunting captures the emotions of a father in search of his loved one and a child seeing his grandfather through his father's eyes. The moving language tries to convey the complex emotions of war. Recommended age 4 years and up.

Bunting, E. (1993). *Fly away home*. Boston: Sandpiper Books.

A boy and his father live in an airport along with another family. This revealing tale talks about the poverty that many people go through at certain points in their lives in spite of working hard. Told through the child's voice, Bunting voices the boy's wish to go to school and live in an apartment. Recommended age 4 years and up.

Grindley, S. (2004). *Spilled water*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishers USA.

This is the heart-rending story of 11-year-old Lu Si-Yan, a Chinese girl who grows up in a loving family until her father dies and her family becomes very poor. She is so poor that her uncle sells her so that her mother and her brother can have a better life. For the next 3 years,

Lu Si-Yan is alone fending for herself finding work in the big cities until she comes to a factory that makes toys for export. She is hired at first to stitch eyes on cute soft bears and later to be a “runner” delivering parts of toy trucks that are completed to the next person in the assembly line. Enduring extremely long hours with no rest, Lu Si-Yan manages to “race, race, race” (pg. 194) for 3 months, working from dawn to midnight, until she completely collapses one day. Recommended age 9 years and up.

Krull, K. (2003). *Harvesting hope: The story of Cesar Chavez*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt Children's Books.

This is the story of the man who mobilized the farmworkers to form a union in the 1960s. As a child, Chavez belonged to this group of people who were oppressed with poor wages, long and grueling work hours, and inhuman treatment. Krull relates this biography of Cesar Chavez through evocative language that is illustrated beautifully by Yuyi Morales. Although not complete in its details, it provides enough information for children to begin to understand the struggles of many in California. Recommended age 4 years and up.

Say, A. (1997). *Allison*. Boston: Sandpiper Books.

In this heartwarming tale, Say tells the story of a young Japanese girl who suddenly realizes that she is adopted when she goes to preschool. Her disappointment and grief at not looking like her parents melts away when she finds a stray cat that she wants to keep. The beautiful water color illustrations lend emotion to the valuable lesson that there are all kinds of families. Recommended age 4 years and up.

Culturally Conscious Books

Bruchac, M. M., & Grace, C. O. (2001). *1621: A new look at thanksgiving*. Washington, DC: National Geographic Society Children's Books.

This nonfiction book gives historical information about the supposed thanksgiving meal shared by the Wampanoag tribe and the Plymouth settlers. Bruchac and Grace break many myths in this book around the events surrounding the thanksgiving story and say that most of what has been passed down as legend is more fiction than fact. Through beautifully illustrated photographs recreated to imitate some of the original scenes, this book gives valuable information about the Wampanoag people. Recommended age 6 years and up.

Douglass, F. (2007). *The narrative of the life of Frederick Douglass: An American slave*. Boston: Book Jungle. (Original work published 1845)

Told in first-person voice, this is an evocative narrative of Frederick Douglass, a slave who, after gaining his freedom, educates himself to become a famous orator and writer. It begins with Douglass saying he does not know when he was born and shows through simple language the horrors of slavery. Recommended age middle to young adult.

English, K. (1997). *Neeny coming, Neeny going*. New York: Troll Communications.

A Coretta Scott King Honor book, this is a tale of changing times on Daufuskie Island off the coast of South Carolina, told through the eyes of Essie, whose cousin Neeny comes to visit from the mainland. It is told in the melodic language that follows the island dialect. Recommended age 3 years and up.

Gilmore, R. (2000). *Lights for Gita*. Gardiner, MN: Tilbury House.

In a picture book first published in Canada, an immigrant child from India, Gita celebrates the Hindu holiday of *Diwali* for the first time in her new home. *Diwali* is a holiday celebrated at the end of October and the beginning of November with lights, fireworks, street theater, sweets, and parties. Many consider it the beginning of a new year. In the November gloom of her new apartment, Gita longs for her extended family in New Delhi and the warmth she's left behind. She cries when an ice storm knocks out the power in all the buildings on her street; but with her parents and her best friend, she lights the *diyas (lamps)* for the festival, and she comes to see that the lights of *Diwali* can beat the darkness outside and the sadness within. Recommended age 4 years and up.

Jimenez, F. (1999). *The circuit*. Orlando, FL: Houghton Mifflin Books for Children.

This is the first in the series of the autobiographical tale of Professor Francisco Jimenez, who came to the United States, along with his family, as a migrant farmworker. Through simple and direct language, Jimenez conveys the hardships, the sacrifices, and the fears of a migrant farmworker child. In this book, he relates how he and his brother have to change schools often, miss classes, or even run away from school, as *La Migra* or immigration officers come to deport them. Recommended age 8 years and up.

Jimenez, F. (2002). *Breaking through*. Boston: Sandpiper Books.

In this book, Jimenez continues his story from where he left off in the previous story and talks about how he successfully completes high school and goes on to college. At the end of the book are many photographs of him and his family that he has been able to gather.

Jimenez, F. (2008). *Reaching out*. Orlando, FL: Houghton Mifflin Books for Children.

This is the third in the series of fictionalized autobiographies of Jimenez and relates the struggles that he faces as he does odd jobs to put himself through college and graduate school. Jimenez relates the "double life" he leads as he does not let on to anyone that he is the child of a migrant farmworker, although he has great respect and love for his family. As the first in his entire family to go to college, he reflects the hopes of his people.

Say, A. (1991). *Tree of cranes*. Orlando, FL: Houghton Mifflin Books for Children.

This is the story of Allen Say's Christmas in Japan as a young boy when his mother decorates a pine tree with paper cranes and tells him about how trees are decorated in California. It is another autobiographical incident that Say turned into a poignant story. Recommended age 4 years and up.

Say, A. (1993). *Grandfather's journey*. Orlando, FL: Houghton Mifflin Books for Children.

This is the story of Allen Say's grandfather, who emigrates to the United States from Japan and settles in California. Illustrated by colorful panels that show the grandfather as a young, handsome man in Japan, traveling to the United States in a boat, wearing fashionable Western clothes, and later as an older man in Japan, the watercolor paintings capture each sentiment and each emotion beautifully as in a personal photo album. The words evoke every immigrant's feelings when he ends with "the funny thing is when I am in one country, I am homesick for the other." Recommended age 4 years and up.

Say, A. (1999). *Tea with milk*. Orlando, FL: Houghton Mifflin Books for Children.

This is the story of Allen Say's mother who was born in San Francisco but travels back to Japan with her parents as a young girl. The cultural shift she has to make is evident in her everyday existence as a Japanese American in Japan. She finally meets a Japanese business man who is able to help her bridge this gap. This is a heartwarming tale of East meets West. Recommended age 5 years and up.

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