

## **Assignment 10: Multicultural and International Literature Journal**

After reviewing chapter 12 of the textbook, choose two multicultural or international books and read them. Both books should be from the list of recommended multicultural or international books from chapter 12.

**NOTE:** Be sure to choose books to read that you haven't already read for previous assignments in this course. Journal entries submitted for duplicate titles, including multiple titles within the same series (e.g. if you've read one book from the Harry Potter series for a previous assignment, reading a second book from the Harry Potter series for this assignment will be considered a duplicate), will not receive points. Remember, one of the goals of this course is to expand your knowledge of children's literature by reading a variety of titles.

Then submit two (2) journal entries (one for each book). Entries should be thoughtful, concise, and informative reports about the books you have read, as the goal is for you to create a resource journal of children's literature based on the books you will read in this course.

Format your journal entries the way we have been formatting them up to this point. By now, you should be familiar with the format.

**Pay attention to the summary criteria!!!!!!**

Each journal entry (1-inch margins, 12-point font and double-spaced, max 2 pages per entry) should include:

1. Title, author, illustrator, an APA citation for the book.
2. a brief summary of the book's content in terms of **literary AND multicultural elements** (i.e. summarize what the book is about in terms of plot, characters, setting, theme, style **accuracy, language, and it's cultural authenticity**),
3. age/grade range for the book and the type of multicultural or international literature it represents,
4. an excerpt from the work; something from the book that was meaningful to you **and explain why**,
5. your evaluation of the literature
6. How you would use it to in a learning activity to promote reading with library patrons or classroom students.

Journal entries are to be submitted electronically via the D2L Dropbox in .doc, .docx, or .rtf format.

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### **Assignment 10 Grading Rubric:**

This assignment is worth **20 points** and is graded based on the following:

For **EACH** journal entry:

1. Title, author, illustrator, an APA citation for the book (1 pt)
2. a brief summary of the book's content in terms of literary elements (i.e. summarize what the book is about in terms of plot, characters, setting, theme, style and it's cultural authenticity), (5 pts)
3. age/grade range for the book and the type of multicultural or international literature it represents, 1 pt)
4. an excerpt from the work; something from the book that was meaningful to you and explain why, (1 pt)
5. your evaluation of the literature (1 pt)
6. How you would use it to in a learning activity to promote reading with library patrons or classroom students. (1 pt)

- Helps young people realize the social injustices endured by particular peoples in the United States and around the world, both now and in the past, to build a determination to work for a more equitable future.
- Builds children's interest in the people and places they are reading about and paves the way to a deeper understanding and appreciation of the geographical and historical content encountered in textbooks and later content-area studies.
- Provides authenticity through literature written by insiders to a country, region, or ethnic group and allows members of that group to define themselves. These portrayals challenge the typical media coverage of violence and crises.
- Develops a bond of shared experience with children of other ethnicities and nations and enables them to acquire cultural literacy with a global perspective.

Although textbooks can provide children with information about a country, literature invites them into the world of children from that culture and provides rich details about daily life, human emotions, and relationships, answering the questions that are significant to children. The textbook may provide facts about the country, but novels about the country show the implications of the facts for children's lives and help readers "live in" the country for a time (Lehman, Freeman, & Scharer, 2010).



## Evaluation and Selection of Multicultural and International Literature

In addition to the requirement that literature have high literary merit, multicultural and international books need to be examined for *cultural authenticity*: the extent to which a book reflects the core beliefs and values and depicts the details of everyday life and language for a specific cultural group. Given the diversity within all cultural groups, there is never one image of life within any culture, and so underlying world views are often more important to consider. Readers from the culture depicted in a book need to be able to identify and feel affirmed that what they are reading rings true in their lives; readers from another culture need to be able to identify and learn something of value about cultural similarities and differences (Fox & Short, 2003). The following criteria should be considered when evaluating and selecting multicultural and international books for libraries and classrooms:

- **Authenticity of cultural beliefs and values from the perspective of that group.** Research the background of the author and illustrator to determine their experiences or research related to this story (e.g., check their websites). Examine the values and beliefs of characters and whether they connect to the actual lives of people from that culture.
- **Accuracy of cultural details in text and illustrations.** Examine the details of everyday life, such as food, clothing, homes, and speech patterns, represented in the book and whether they fit within the range of experiences of that culture.
- **Integration of culturally authentic language.** Look for the natural integration of the language or dialect of a specific cultural group, especially within dialogue. Some terms or names in the original language of translated books, for example, should be retained. Check whether a glossary is included if needed.
- **Power relationships between characters.** Examine which characters are in roles of power or significance in a book, with a particular focus on how the story is resolved and who is in leadership and action roles.
- **Perspectives and audience.** Look at whose perspectives and experiences are portrayed and who tells the story. In particular, consider whether the story is told from a mainstream or European American perspective *about* ethnically or globally diverse characters. Also consider whether the intended audience is children from within that culture or if the book was written to inform a mainstream audience about a culture.
- **Balance between historic and contemporary views of groups.** The majority of literature about global and ethnic cultures is found in the genres of traditional literature and historical fiction, creating stereotypes of these cultures as dated and set in the past. Search for books that reflect contemporary images.
- **Adequate representation of any group within a collection.** No one book can definitively describe a culture or cultural experience. Look for a range of books that provide multiple representations of a

culture and be aware of particular images that are overrepresented—for example, almost all of the picturebooks on Korean Americans depict them as newly arrived immigrants to the United States and most books depict the Middle East as a rural landscape of sand and camels. These overrepresentations reflect and create stereotypes of a particular group and do not reflect the diversity of experiences within that group.

Book awards can guide teachers and librarians toward high-quality multicultural and international books. The best known of these is the Coretta Scott King Award, given annually to an African American author and illustrator whose books are judged to be the most outstanding inspirational and educational literature for children. The Américas Award and the Pura Belpré Award, which honor outstanding Latino authors and illustrators of children's books, are good resources for locating authentic literature across Latino contexts. Other awards include the Asian/Pacific American Award for Literature, honoring outstanding work of Asian American authors and illustrators, and the American Indian Youth Literature Award, honoring the best writing and illustrations by and about American Indians. Awards such as these encourage the publication of more and better quality literature highlighting the experiences of diverse cultures.

Awards for international literature are plentiful. The Mildred L. Batchelder Award is given to a U.S. publisher of the most distinguished translated children's book, thus encouraging the translation and publication of international books in the United States (see Appendix A). The Outstanding International Books List ([www.usbbby.org](http://www.usbbby.org)) and Notable Books for a Global Society (<http://www.clrsig.org/nbgs.php>) are annual award lists. Also, many countries have their own national awards, similar to the Newbery and Caldecott awards in the United States. The Hans Christian Andersen award winners and nominees are a good source of the most outstanding authors and illustrators from around the world ([www.ibby.org](http://www.ibby.org)). Worlds of Words ([www.wowlit.org](http://www.wowlit.org)) has a searchable database of global and international literature available in the United States and several online journals with book reviews of cultural authenticity and vignettes on global literature in classrooms.

In addition, small presses have become a source of multicultural and international books that are particularly valuable for their cultural points of view.

**Asian American Curriculum Project.** Publishes and distributes Asian American books from small presses. [www.asianamericanbooks.com](http://www.asianamericanbooks.com). (Also see Asia for Kids at [www.afk.com](http://www.afk.com)).

**Cinco Puntos.** Focuses on stories of the U.S.–Mexico border region, the Southwest, and Mexico. [www.cincopuntos.com](http://www.cincopuntos.com).

**Piñata Books/Arte Público.** Publishes children's books with a Latino perspective, including bilingual books. <https://artepublicopress.com/about-pinata-books-2/>.

**Just Us Books.** Produces Afrocentric books that enhance the self-esteem of African American children. [www.justusbooks.com](http://www.justusbooks.com).

**Lee & Low Books.** Asian American–owned small press. Stresses authenticity in stories for Asian American, Latino, and African American children. Includes the Children's Book Press imprint. [www.leeandlow.com](http://www.leeandlow.com).

**Oyate.** Evaluates books with Native themes and distributes books, particularly those written and illustrated by Native people. Native American evaluators and organization. [www.oyate.org](http://www.oyate.org).

**Salina Bookshelf.** Small press with a focus on the Diné tribe. <http://www.salinabookshelf.com>.

Evaluating and selecting multicultural and international literature for your classroom or library, although essential, is not enough to ensure that children will actually read the books. Without adult guidance, children tend to choose books about children like themselves, so invite them to explore these books through reading the books aloud, giving booktalks, and encouraging discussion in literature circles.



## Multicultural Literature

### Historical Overview of Multicultural Literature

Many cultures living in the United States were ignored within children's books or portrayed as crudely stereotyped characters, objects of ridicule, or shadowy secondary characters. Books with blatant racism, such as Helen Bannerman's *The Story of Little Black Sambo* (1900) and Hugh Lofting's *The*