

2003

# Choosing quality multicultural literature for use in a general classroom

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## Recommended Citation

Dykstra, Jill M., "Choosing quality multicultural literature for use in a general classroom" (2003). *Graduate Research Papers*. 579.  
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# Choosing quality multicultural literature for use in a general classroom

## **Abstract**

The history of multicultural education has changed from the conception of it in the 1960's until now. It emerged primarily in the 1960's, initially in response to cultural deprivation theory. Today, however, multicultural education is linked to cultural diversity. Most teachers use multicultural education and literature only if they have a diverse population; however, the belief is that all students need to experience diversity. Multicultural literature may help not only students to broaden their knowledge and information about others, but may also provide teachers with new ideas and perspectives.

**Choosing Quality Multicultural  
Literature for Use  
in a General Classroom**

**A Graduate Project  
Submitted to the  
Division of Reading Education  
Department of Curriculum and Instruction  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Masters of Arts in Education  
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA**

**by  
Jill M. Dykstra  
July 16, 2003**

This Project by: Jill M. Dykstra  
Titled: Choosing Quality Multicultural Literature and Implementation in a  
General Classroom

has been approved as meeting the research requirement for the Degree of Master  
of Arts in Education.

7-17-2003

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## Introduction

Our classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse. According to Banks (1993), about 45.5% of the nation's school age children will be people of color by 2020. With this large number of students of color in our classrooms, teachers must be ready to teach our diverse classrooms. The history of multicultural education has changed from the conception of it in the 1960's until now. According to Banks (1995) quoting Ogbu, multicultural education "...emerged primarily in the 1960's, initially in response to cultural deprivation theory. Today, however, multicultural education is linked to cultural diversity. Moreover, the current demand for multicultural education is for both minorities who are doing relatively well in school and those who are not" (pg. 124).

Minorities are not the only population that can be affected by multicultural literature. Most teachers use multicultural education and literature only if they have a diverse population; however, the belief is that all students need to experience diversity. "Ethnic encapsulation"...refers to that limited exposure one has to cultures other than one's own" (Macphee, 1997, pg. 115). Macphee also states that most of the exposure that ethnically encapsulated white students have are through television or superficial interactions. These types of experiences do not give a whole or true picture of other groups.

Teachers need to be educated about the diversity in the classrooms and in our society. According to Hynds and Rubin, (1988) quoting from Delpit, "...if teacher education programs include diverse parents, community members, and faculty among those who prepare future teachers, and take seriously the need to develop in those teachers the humility required for learning from the surrounding context when entering a culturally different setting" (pg. 214). In a study, Schmidt (1995) stated that her findings imply "... that schools may actually interfere with children's literacy learning if educators do not work to understand the diverse backgrounds of the children in their classrooms." Multicultural literature may help not only students to broaden their knowledge and information about others but may also provide teachers with new ideas and perspectives.

The functions of multicultural literature can be broken into five categories: 1.) It can provide knowledge or information, 2.) It can change the way students look at their world by offering varying perspectives, 3.) It can promote or develop an appreciation for diversity, 4.) It can give rise to critical thinking, and 5.) It can provide enjoyment and illuminate human experience in both its unity and its variety (Bishop, 1997). The purpose of this project is to examine the cultural authenticity of children's literature. The scope of this project includes the first four of the five broad functions of multicultural literature: knowledge, perspectives, appreciation, and critical thinking.

The information collected from the literature review will be used in a professional development activity/project. The method of presentation uses a workshop format. The audience for the activity will include practicing teachers who are a part of the school system and anyone interested in learning how to choose quality multicultural literature and to use it in a classroom setting. The approximate time needed for the presentation is four and a half-hours. The workshop is designed as a half-day session or as a series of two one-hour sessions and one two and a half-hour session.

## Literature Review

Few things have affected modern American education as much as the changing face of its student population. An increasing number of students in American classrooms have been born in other countries thus making students with differing backgrounds more prevalent. These students bring to school their rich cultural backgrounds. American education has responded to this cultural diversity with multicultural education and literature. Yet, like so many other educational concepts, multicultural education is complex, multidimensional, and controversial. Before American education can be truly multicultural, educators and the public must agree on a definition of multicultural education and literature, believe it to be important, and understand how it will affect traditional American education.

American education has been slow to implement multicultural education through literature, and when it has been implemented, it has taken on numerous forms. "Some teachers view it only as the inclusion of content about ethnic groups into the curriculum; others view it as an effort to reduce prejudice; still others view it as a celebration of ethnic holidays and events" (Banks, 1993, pg. 145). Multicultural literature takes so many different forms because no clear definitions exist. Even the experts in the field offer diverse definitions. Kruse

(1992) defines multicultural literature rather narrowly as “books by and about people of color” (pg. 156). Sleeter and Grant (1988) give a somewhat expanded definition for multicultural literature. They consider it to be the body of materials that “recognize, accept, and affirm human differences and similarities related to gender, race, handicap, and class” (pg. 42). In a much more inclusive definition of the term, Hillard (1995) views multicultural literature as that which “emphasizes respect for the different historical perspectives and cultures in human society” (pg. 728).

Some educators are reluctant to implement a multicultural curriculum because they do not recognize its importance. Recent trends in immigration are one reason to broaden the curriculum and to add a variety of literature to the classrooms. According to Kellogg (1988), the children of recent immigrants are less prepared for school than were immigrant children of past generations. In addition, these children come primarily from Asian, Hispanic, and Caribbean countries, and they bring with them a wide range of backgrounds, languages, and cultures. First (1988) sees “an increasingly diverse student population [that] confronts an increasingly rigid school environment”(pg. 142). In 1994, 2.6 million children are classified as limited-English proficient, and more than 6.3 million children speak a language other than English at home (McKeon, 1994). According to Banks (1993), as has been noted previously, about 45.5% of the nation’s school age children will be people of color by 2020. A traditional

curriculum with mono-cultural literature cannot possibly meet the needs of so many diverse children.

Once educators agree on the need for multicultural education and literature and on their definitions, the real work begins. How do schools incorporate literature into an already overburdened curriculum? According to Banks (1995) he states the need to transform the curriculum so children view reality differently. However, even Banks is sympathetic to any attempt to incorporate multicultural information. "I think it's ok to start with Black History Month, as long as you don't stop there... You can't transform the curriculum overnight" (pg. 123). Ideally, though, Banks advocates examining topics in the current curriculum from different points of view and changing teaching strategies so students from culturally diverse backgrounds will learn more effectively. It is not necessary to abandon current studies; it is only necessary to study them differently.

Numerous educators have conducted and examined research to help achieve Banks' goals. Ladson-Billings' (1994) examination determined five areas important to educating a multicultural population. Those areas are teachers' beliefs about students, curriculum content and materials, instructional approaches, educational settings, and teacher education. She cited Winfield's (1986) findings that teachers generally expect more from Caucasian students than from minority students and from middle-class than from lower class

students. Such lower expectations lower achievement. In other words if teachers do this, these students do not feel like they need to achieve as much as Caucasian and middle-class students. She also found that a sincere commitment to multicultural education and literature requires more than superficial celebrations of heroes and holidays; rather, it requires a regular curriculum that includes a range of perspectives. She advocates honoring the students' prior learning to move the students from where they are to where the teacher would like them to be and equalizing the quality of the schools where all American children learn. Finally, Ladson-Billings stresses the importance of ongoing teacher education. Teachers cannot change their teaching practices without instruction and support.

Students' education has traditionally come from textbooks. Garcia conducted research on textbooks in 1993 to determine the acceptance of multicultural education in American schools and to determine whether multicultural textbooks make a difference. He discovered that diverse groups received more attention in those textbooks than they have in the past but that such coverage is superficial. Garcia concluded that textbook authors do not attempt to suggest the interconnectedness of the world's societies. Thus readers are provided with a limited view of multiculturalism. Garcia then asks what textbooks would look like if minorities wrote them. He suggests a complex situation where each minority would argue among itself about what its history

would look like. Garcia's conclusion is that, while textbooks are often important determinants of what students are expected to learn, they will always be limiting. Even if all textbooks were multicultural, they would never cure education's problems.

Several researchers point out difficulties with implementing multicultural literature. Howard (1993) considers the changing role of Caucasian Americans with the emergence of multicultural education. He cites recent increases in racist acts as the American population diversifies, notes reasons for the whites' reluctance to change, and suggests ways to move past this hesitation. He suggests the need for honesty, humility, respect, and action because, ultimately, the issue of cultural diversity is a human problem, a struggle we are all in together.

Ostrowski (1994) discusses four things that educators feel as being problems with their teaching of multicultural literature. Some educators feel multicultural awareness was not emphasized in their education. They feel confused, wanting to learn more, to read non-stereotypical yet appropriate texts, but not sure where to go for information. He states another problem as being the opportunity to find the 'extra' time needed for teachers to familiarize themselves with the literature as well as background information about new cultures is a commodity lacking. Another problem is that many of the schools are saddled with restrictive budgets and are not well equipped with multicultural

texts. Even those schools that are not under a financial burden may have problems in the way of a lack of knowledge on the administrative as well as the departmental level about how to choose appropriate texts. The final problem that Ostrowski discusses is that "...many students are not receptive to the literature of cultures other than their own." (pg. 1).

Other researchers (Sacco, 1993; Smagorinsky, 1992) discuss censorship as a major deterrent to multicultural education and literature. According to these researchers, teachers fear the use of multicultural literature because some parents want their children to read only about their people, while others attack books about minorities as racist. Further, when a teacher selects certain multicultural literature to study, they omit others. Therefore, the teacher is in effect censoring students' conceptions of other cultures. Smagorinsky (1992) raises the following questions about developing a multicultural curriculum:

1. In striving for multicultural inclusion, which groups should teachers single out for their students to study?
2. Should teachers consider the potential offensiveness of a work?
3. Should teachers consider the moral, social, and political values of a text?
4. Should teachers strive for a balance between positive and negative images of various groups?
5. Should the teacher choose texts that students often misunderstand because of complex literary techniques?

6. Can teachers teach any problematic text so that it can be a valuable experience for any student?

Although Smagorinsky believes society needs to share the experiences of various minority groups, he feels that sharing multicultural literature in a fair and equitable way is impossible. He suggests that the best solution is to attempt to present literature that represents all people as complex and balanced.

Smagorinsky's warning is clear: Educator may be so focused on developing a fair and equitable curriculum that they may lose sight of the secondary dangers and inequalities they themselves may be creating. By this he means that if we (teachers) focus too much on equitable curriculum, it may come across as favoritism toward the cultural groups.

Research on multicultural education and literature is flooding our professional literature. The amount of research is a reflection of the issue's importance. The changing population requires an examination of the current curriculum. If the existing curriculum and literature cannot meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population, it needs to change. Just how it should or will change is not yet clear. What is clear is that failure to change will meet the needs of fewer and fewer American students by not addressing the diverse populations.

In this next section I will be discussing four of the five broad functions of multicultural literature. Again, I will only be discussing four of the five

functions because the fifth is dealing with quality literature as a whole, while I am primarily looking at quality cultural literature. The next section also gives an idea of how I will be organizing each section of the workshop.

## Four Broad Functions of Multicultural Literature

### *It can provide knowledge or information.*

Students in our classrooms, diverse or not, need to know about differences and similarities in our society. The reason for this is to inform and educate them about the cultures. Multicultural literature can provide knowledge and information about other cultures. It can give students (that have not had any interaction or experience with other cultures) a chance to see things that may be similar to them and (it can give students that have had interaction and experience with other cultures more) information about people that may be different from them. It can also help us look past stereotypes and biases that we may have about certain groups of people or cultures. "The purpose of authentic multicultural literature, is to help liberate us from all the preconceived stereotypical hang-ups that imprison us within narrow boundaries" (Cai, 1995, pg. 5).

Multicultural literature can also provide information about the fight for power. "Multiculturalism is about diversity and inclusion, but what is more important, it is also about power structures and struggle" (Cai, 1998, pg. 320). Multicultural literature can illustrate to students the struggle for recognition and

acceptance that a group of people has experienced. "...we also need to read multicultural literature that concentrates on oppressed groups" (Cai, 1998).

Books such as *The Eternal Spring of Mr. Ito* and *Number the Stars* can show students information about the struggles of the Japanese internees and the Jews during World War II.

Students may know things that they have learned in their history books and things they thought they understood. However, they can find that what they thought was not the whole truth or they may add something to what they already know. In Macphee's article (1997), the teacher found it to be true, that although most of the students seemed to know that African Americans were once enslaved, it was a surprise to them how slaves were treated and the degree to which they would go to be free.

***It can change the way students look at their world by offering varying perspectives.***

Students can use their own lives to draw parallels and differing perspectives to help them understand people that differ from them. According to Howard (1993, pg. 38), "We can become aware that our energy and vision, along with those of other Americans of all cultures, are essential to the healing that must take place if we are to survive as a pluralistic and just nation."

Students can use literature to recognize similarities in a myriad of situations and

note how people of differing backgrounds and cultures may differ in their responses and actions.

Multicultural literature can also be used for students who have not had any experience with people from other cultures. It can be a chance for ethnically encapsulated students to face experiences that are different from what they may already know. Some children's picture books show families celebrating differing holidays, living with extended families and traditions that they celebrate.

*It can promote or develop an appreciation for diversity.*

According to Rasinski and Padak (1990), since literature tells the stories of human events and the human condition, and not simply the facts, literature does more than just change minds, it can change people's hearts. When people have a change of heart, they can be more open to diversity in our society. Part of this appreciation comes from reading quality multicultural literature and looking into the lives of characters in these books. They are able to see how they live and feel about events in their lives, how events affect them and how they deal with conflict. Students cannot only see how the characters react to what is going on around them, but they also have a chance to draw parallels to their own lives. "Once the heart and the mind have been moved, teachers may encourage

children to react in positive fashions" (Rasinski & Padak, 1990). Students can see how things they say or do can affect others.

Multicultural literature can also provide students with an appreciation for contributions that various groups have made. According to Fang, Fu and Lamme (1999), multicultural literature is supposed to accurately present the historical, cultural, political, sociological, and educational contributions of various ethnic and cultural groups that reside in the United States. For some students seeing these contributions, will interest, impress, and surprise them, because they may not have seen the contributions before or thought them to be someone else's.

***It can give rise to critical thinking.***

Multicultural literature can make students question prior knowledge. It also gives teachers a way to assess the higher level thinking skills of their students. It can help students confront stereotypes and social issues, and give students an opportunity to discuss issues and concerns that they have while reading. "Students should have the opportunity to discuss and reflect upon multicultural stories as literacy texts, to participate in a deeper study of diverse cultures across the curriculum, and to come to the understanding that "others"...also have subjectivities constructed across many registers" (Fang, Fu, & Lamme, 1999, pg. 260). "Without the kinds of conversations that encourage

skepticism and raise challenges to stereotyped interpretations of characters, children have only mainstream culture to refer to as a source of explanation for the fictional and actual events they encounter" (Enciso, 1994, pg. 530).

Each of the four functions of multicultural literature discussed above helps students learn about our diverse society and about their diverse classroom. The following project is designed to help teachers choose quality multicultural literature and incorporate these functions successfully in their classrooms.

## Workshop Schedule

### Session One :

1. Introduction
2. Objectives
3. Definitions and Reflections

One Hour

### Session Two :

1. Examples of quality multicultural literature
2. Examples of problematic multicultural literature
3. Interactive choosing multicultural literature (guidelines)

One Hour

### Session Three :

1. How to use multicultural literature
2. Interactive : using multicultural literature in a classroom (examples from participants)
3. Comments and questions

Two and a half hours

## Session One-

The first session is more about the process of getting to know the participants and the presenter. The format that I will use is from Supervision of Literacy Programs by Erickson (1995). It is a three stage "unfreezing" process (pg. 81-82).

In the first stage, I will introduce myself and welcome everyone to the session. Using the Erickson format, I will then give each participant a 3x5 card. They will be asked to write down what they expect the workshop to teach them. The participants will not use their names in an effort to promote truthful comments on the cards.

The second part of the activity involves our moving into the workshop itself. The objectives of the workshop will be presented: 1.) reviewing referential materials and guidelines that will help choose quality multicultural literature and, 2.) implementing the quality multicultural literature into a general education classroom. After discussing the objectives, I will put the schedule for the workshop on an overhead projector. Each participant will be given another 3x5 card to write any questions or concerns. The members will then be put into equal numbered groups to discuss their questions or concerns with other

participants. While this is going on, I will use the time to look over the cards to gain any insights into the group dynamics.

In the final stage of the activity, the members of the group will come together again in the large group. Further comments will be able to be made concerning the second set of cards. If there are any specific questions, I will invite the members to meet with me after the workshop session.

The information part of the workshop will begin by defining multicultural literature from the literature review regarding multicultural literature. (Appendix A)

## What is Multicultural Literature?

Figure 1.

### Definition:

Literature about racial and ethnic minority groups that are culturally and socially different from the White Anglo-Saxon majority in the United States, whose largely middle-class values and customs are most represented in American literature.

I will explain that the racial and ethnic minority groups mean African Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, Hispanic/Latino and low socio-economic peoples. I will also explain that that definition will be used during the entirety of the project. Using the overhead, I will discuss the three types of multicultural literature (see Figure 2), counter misconceptions of multicultural literature (see Figure 3), and discuss four of the five broad functions of multicultural literature (see Figure 4), using children's literature examples.

## Three Types of Multicultural Literature

Figure 2.

Classification by origin and authorship:

1. World Literature:

Literature from non-Western countries  
(folktales- The Korean Cinderella)

2. Cross Cultural Literature:

Literature about interrelations among people of different cultures  
(example: Pink and Say, The Star Fisher)

Literature about people of a given cultural group by a writer from another culture (outsiders to the culture- Adopted by Eagles)

3. Parallel Cultural Literature:

Literature by parallel cultural groups to represent their experiences of being acculturated and socialized within the group (example: Heart of a Chief)

I will explain the choice of the books in each of these examples as I discuss The Three Types of Multicultural Literature. I will start with the annotated bibliographies of each book; i.e. The Korean Cinderella – is a folk tale from Korea very much like the folk tale of Cinderella. It is classified “World Literature” because it is an example of literature from a non-Western country. Pink and Say – is a story about two young men, one black and one white during the Civil War and their interrelationship between two different cultures. It is classified “Cross Cultural Literature” because of its portrayal of how these two young men interact with each other. The Star Fisher - is a story about an Asian family that moves to the south and their interactions with citizens of the town they move to. It is classified “Cross Cultural Literature” because its story line

describes how the family interacts with the town's citizens. Adopted by Eagles – is a story about a young Native American who gets adopted by eagles. It is classified “Cross Cultural Literature” because it is written by an author that is not a part of the culture he is writing about. Heart of a Chief – is a story of a young man's struggle to live in two worlds, the mainstream world and the world on his reservation. It is classified “Parallel Culture Literature” because the young man walks a fine line between the mainstream and the reservation worlds. It also shows how he negotiates the two worlds when they intersect with each other.

Counter Misconceptions of Multicultural Literature by pointing out what it is NOT!

Figure 3.

- Multicultural literature is not an exotic or substandard form of literature.
- Multicultural literature is not just for some children.
- Multicultural literature is not merely for special occasions.
- Multicultural literature is not the concern of some teachers.

The piece of literature I would use to explain this overhead would be Heart of a Chief. We will look at parts of the book that would be an example of each of the points on figure 3. For example, point one; Multicultural literature is not an exotic or substandard form of literature, the book can be used to show students that the young man in the story is experiencing everyday struggles and decisions that the students may have themselves made. Point two; Multicultural literature is not just for some children, the book can be used to point out that all students walk in different worlds. They have their “home world” and their “school world”. They have their “neighborhood world” and their “mainstream world”. Students could talk about the differences in all of those worlds, how they talk, act, and participate. Point three; Multicultural literature is not merely for special occasions, the book definitely does not need to be read during a “special occasion” to get its point across. It can simply be read as a read aloud at any

time during the year or incorporated into a unit on American Indian reservations. It is a story about how one student interacts between two worlds and tries to negotiate both. Point four; Multicultural literature is not just for some children, the book is a story about an eleven-year-old Penacook Indian boy living on a reservation facing his father's alcoholism, a controversy surrounding plans for a casino on a tribal island, and insensitivity toward Native Americans in his school and nearby town. We would explore how some students might be facing some situations that are similar, such as parental troubles and issues with peers.

## Four of the Five Broad Functions of Multicultural Literature

### Figure 4.

- It can provide knowledge or information.
- It can change the way students look at their world by offering varying perspectives.
- It can promote or develop an appreciation for diversity.
- It can give rise to critical thinking.

Using examples from the picture book, Halmoni and the Picnic, I will explain four of the functions of multicultural literature. This picture book describes how a Korean American girl's third grade class helps her newly arrived grandmother feel more comfortable with her new life in the United States. We will discuss how the girl and her class help her grandmother feel welcome. For example:

Point one: It can provide knowledge or information, this book introduces students to things in the Korean culture that they did not know about, food, dress and interactions between the grandmother and the granddaughter. Point two: It can change the way students look at their world by offering varying perspectives, the book talks about the way the granddaughter looks at her grandmother and is a little embarrassed by realizes that the differences are not bad. It also shows the students in the granddaughter's class as being open to the differences as well. Point three: It can promote or develop an appreciation for

diversity, the students in the book could appreciate Halmoni's differences in dress and food and find that these were interesting to them. It shows the readers that these differences are not always a bad thing. Point four; it can give rise to critical thinking, can be illustrated by the act of the picnic and how the students in the girl's class viewed it as compared to the grandmother's perception.

During this part of the discussion, any unfamiliar terms or further explanations will be clarified through children's literature examples and explanations. The members of the group will be told that they can ask questions at any time, or ask for further definitions when needed.

## Session Two-

Before the second session, I will make arrangements to have the members meet in the school library. The focus will be to involve them in choosing quality multicultural literature. I will have examples of quality pieces (i.e. Going Home, Somewhere in the Darkness, Adopted by Eagles, The Korean Cinderella, Pink and Say, Tar Beach, The Star Fisher, Heart of a Chief, etc.), examples of problematic or non-quality pieces (i.e. Ten Little Rabbits) of multicultural literature, and examples of referential books (see “Resources for Teachers”).

The selection implementation of multicultural literature will be the focus of the remaining sessions of the workshop. The first thing I will do is to introduce pieces of multicultural literature by title, author, publisher, and brief synopsis of the book. We will begin with quality pieces of literature. Using The Three Types of Multicultural Literature (see Figure 2) from the previous session, I will classify all the pieces in categories mentioned by having them already put into each pile and then talking about the group of books as I get to the categories (for example: Going Home, Heart of a Chief, and Somewhere in the Darkness can be classified as “Parallel Cultural Literature” because their characters are trying to maneuver between two worlds. Star Fisher, Pink and Say, and Adopted by Eagles can be classified as “Cross Cultural Literature” because their characters show interaction between two cultures and how those interactions

affect the characters. The Korean Cinderella can be classified as “World Literature” because it is a folk tale from a non-Western culture. I will also be showing the group referential books that can help them in their quest for quality multicultural literature pieces (i.e. Kaleidoscope, Using Multiethnic literature in the K-8 Classroom, Multicultural Resources for Children, Tapestry: A Multicultural Anthology, Developing Multicultural Awareness through Children's Literature, Multicultural Teaching, etc.)). These referential books will be guides to help teachers choose quality literature. With the books as guides, I will also use an overhead projector to help teachers use guidelines to pick the literature pieces (see Figure 5).

## Guidelines for Evaluating Multicultural Literature

### Figure 5.

- Diversity and Range of Representations  
(different perspectives – The Year of Impossible Goodbyes)
- Avoidance of Stereotypes/Authenticity  
(examples: Ten Little Rabbits and Heart of a Chief)
- Language Considerations  
(avoiding negative words – Going Home)
- The perspective of the book  
(example: Somewhere in the Darkness)

The overhead will help me discuss different issues in selecting multicultural literature by using examples of children's literature. I will also be using the literature examples to show what I mean by the statements and how they meet the criteria.

We will also use these guidelines (see Figure 5) to look at examples of problematic multicultural literature. I will discuss the definition of each guideline using the books as examples of what I will be saying. By using these guidelines, the group will be able to explain why the examples I show them are problematic. I will again introduce each piece of literature with the title, author, and publisher. I will also give a brief synopsis of each book. We will talk about each book and I will be allowing time after each synopsis for teachers to ask

questions about the pieces of literature. We will also be looking at issues that we need to be aware of in selecting multicultural literature pieces (see Figure 6).

I will again be using literature examples to discuss each point.

## Issues in Selecting Multicultural Literature

### Figure 6.

- Outsiders writing about experiences that happen in another culture  
(example: Paul Goble's Brave Eagle's account of the Fetterman fight, 21 December 1866)
- Assuming that literature will cover all groups  
(example: I Speak English for My Mom)
- Authenticity  
(examples: Ten Little Rabbits and Heart of a Chief)
- Accuracy  
(example: Paul Goble's Native American folktales)

I will explain the issues behind each of these as I talk about them using the books to point out the example. Point one: Outsiders writing about experiences that happen in another culture, using Paul Goble's Brave Eagle's account of the Fetterman Fight, 21 December 1866, I will talk about the background of the writer and how his background helps him write stories that are not from his cultural background but from another groups. I will discuss how it is possible for some authors to do this, which is to immerse themselves in the culture. Point two: Assuming that literature will cover all groups, using I Speak English for My Mom, I will discuss the issue that literature does not speak for all cultures, by using the book to show one author's viewpoint. Point three: Authenticity, using Ten Little Rabbits and Heart of a Chief, I will show how some books are not authentic to cultural and how some books are. I will be using Ten Little

Rabbits as the example of unauthentic books (a book that does not portray authentic dress of Native American tribes) and Heart of a Chief as an authentic book (a book that speaks of authentic conflicts that a young boy can have growing up on a reservation). Point four: Accuracy, using Paul Goble's Native American Folktales, I will discuss how Mr. Goble's background, illustrations and writing are important to the accuracy of his books, in the fact that he has immersed himself in the culture.

The final section of the session will be an opportunity for the members of the group to try out what we have learned. It will be a time for them to use the referential materials for choosing quality multicultural literature. The books will be placed in the front of the room for them to look at individually. The participants will be able to examine the books at their leisure to help them understand how the authors of these books classify quality multicultural literature. This will also be a time for any questions or concerns about the literature or how to choose it. I will be available to have them ask me questions on an individual basis. Each member will be given a copy of the Guidelines for Evaluating Multicultural Literature (see Figure 5) to help them in their selections. They will also be given a sheet (see Appendix B) that will allow them to write down book titles, authors, and any information that might be helpful to them. It will be a way for each member to compile a list of quality multicultural literature pieces that they can use in their own classrooms. I will

ask the participants to come up with ideas of how they can use their pieces of literature in their classroom for the next session. They will be put into groups and I will have them write down everything they can think of. They will then come up with the top ten ideas to share at the next session.

### Session Three-

The last session will again be set up in the school library. I will start this session with a presentation of how I have used multicultural literature in the classroom. I will first give them the background of my experience and have a display of visuals (i.e. flags, pictures, postcards, candy, newspapers, etc.) in the front of the room. I will use the James Banks (1989) model of the Hierarchy of approaches to integrating multicultural content into the curriculum to help explain my lesson (see the following). I will also be giving the participants an outline of the hierarchy (see Appendix C) for their own framework and for them to take notes on.

*James Banks's (1989) hierarchy consists of, 1) Contributing, 2) Additive, 3) Transformation, and 4) Decision Making/Action. I will explain more about the curriculum areas as we look through each and discuss them using examples.*

*In 1997, I went to Korea through Camp Adventure. When I returned I started right away with my student teaching. I had already informed my cooperating teacher about my trip and we had discussed different ways I could incorporate my experiences in Korea into the curriculum I will describe what I did in my student teaching experience as it relates to Banks's four curriculum area models. The class was a fifth grade.*

*In the children's section of the library were picture books showing the Korean dress, food, and festivals. Each book showed the bright colors of the Korean clothing and colors of the country. I was able to use these books for the children in the classroom. Another book that I used was Halmoni and the Picnic. The book uses some Korean words and shows food that the girl and her halmoni (grandmother) eat. At first, I thought the book might be too young for*

*the students, but they were able to enjoy it, especially after I brought out the kimbap we had just read about in the story.*

### **Contributing Model:**

*In the contributing model, you find, what is called, the four f's: food, fashion, festivals and families. This model is one that introduces students to the world of the multicultural. Most of the literature used in this model shows people having fun and gives a description of things. Rasinski and Padak (1990) explain in their article the essence of the Banks model. In this model, I was able to use some of my visuals to allow the students to get an introduction into learning more about another country. I had pictures of different dishes I had experienced in Korea. I also made some Korean food. I prepared something for the students to try and talked about the dish. I had a hanbok, which is the "national" dress of Korea, made for me to show the students along with pictures of a family I got to know in Korea and of festivals that took place while I was in Korea. I had a newspaper, a tape with music, a Coca-Cola can, a cookie box, and the flag of the country. I also had books that showed them festivals in Korea. I tried to show the students the similarities and differences of our two countries. The contribution model gives students a brief introduction to other cultures.*

### **Additive Model:**

*The next model, the additive model, starts integrating multicultural literature and education into the curriculum. It is really beginning assimilation. For example, the lessons that I did on Korea started in the Social Studies unit that we were working on. My cooperating teacher and I had decided before I left, that we would take a section from the back of the book and make that the starting unit. It talked about the world and all of the differences we could find in it. Into this curriculum, I added my experiences in Korea. We talked about similarities and differences between the United States and Korea. We also looked at other countries as well, Guatemala, Mexico and Sweden. These three countries were used because we had children that had either just immigrated or had very strong ties to the country. We had family members come into the classroom to speak on their experiences. They were instrumental in the students learning. In an article I read, (Schmidt, 1995), the point was made that, "educators should educate themselves on the diversity of their classrooms". I feel that by using the students in this part of the model, we were able to educate not only the educators, but also students in the room. It gave the students a sense of belonging in the classroom and a sense of identity with their peers.*

## **Transformation and Decision Making/Action Models:**

*The transformation model and the Decision Making/Action are the last two models of Banks' hierarchy. In these models, the students are able to discuss issues and make decisions about them along with acting upon their decisions. For these parts of the model, we decided to debate an issue. I had given the students some history about Korea (The Year of the Impossible Good-byes) and the Korean War. We decided to debate the reunification issue. My cooperating teacher did some prior knowledge learning with the students, talking to them about the reunification of East and West Germany. We felt it was necessary to look at something that was similar to what we would be discussing. At first, this process seemed to be a hard thing to do, I was not sure if the students would understand, but I had a lot of help on this issue from the cooperating teacher. We used Germany as our prior knowledge lead in and then started looking at the issues in Korea. We had the students pick a side to research and divided the class. The class had 20 students in it, so the groups were even. I took one group and my cooperating teacher took the other. We were there as resources, facilitators of discussion and as mediators. The students were the ones that debated the issue. After this we had them respond to what they, personally thought about the issue.*

*In an article by Fang, Fu and Lamme, (1997), a point that they made in their article was that they thought literacy needed to be reconceptualized to educate people on diverse learners and diversity. I think that if you can use Banks's four curricular models you can do just that. I have found in my research of multicultural literature, that a model like this can work. It takes a lot of extra work, but in our diverse classrooms, we cannot just teach to the middle. According to Dudley-Marling, (1997) we cannot just talk about one area and expect everyone to understand what we are talking about. Different groups of people do not all have the same experiences.*

After my presentations on how I use multicultural literature and education in my classroom, I will give the participants their turn. At the end of previous session the members will be asked to brainstorm how to use a piece of multicultural literature in their classroom. This section will give the group a chance to describe a way to implement the literature and see how others would

do it as well. They will be in groups of four or five with one piece of literature. They will develop a lesson plan for the piece of literature to use in their curriculum. Each group will then be given approximately 5-10 minutes to discuss how they developed their lesson plan and how they will incorporate their piece of literature into their curriculum. After the presentations, I will be allotting approximately 10-15 minutes for feedback or questions from the whole group to each of the small groups.

The conclusion of this workshop will include a time for writing and reflection. Each member of the group will be given a form (see Appendix D) to evaluate the workshop they attended and to reflect on the concept of implementing and choosing quality multicultural literature in a general classroom. The commentaries will remain anonymous. Just before we conclude, I will ask the participants if they would like to share any comments, concerns, questions or reflections. Finally, I will have the members give their reflections to me so that I may reflect on my performance in the workshop.

## Conclusion

"Multicultural literature can assist educators in creating meaningful literacy experiences for all children. Teachers and students are co-inquirers in the teaching and learning process and in constructing meaning. Meaningful literacy experiences emerge when children and young adults read about universal themes in multicultural literature..." (Dreyer, 1997).

This project attempts to address the issue of choosing and using quality multicultural literature in a classroom. It also looks at how it may help to minimize feelings of isolation, and empowers teachers and students to share and educate others about themselves and other cultures. It helps to generate an atmosphere of respect, acceptance, and support that strengthens the learning of the students in the classroom to help them reach the highest level of learning, and have the greatest impact on their success.

According to a quote from Diaz (2001), "The ultimate answer to creating effective multicultural teaching practices is *empowering* teachers to make better decisions for themselves within their own classroom. Empowerment here means having the knowledge, will, and skill to incorporate ethnicity and diversity....". My hope is that this professional development project will do just that. In choosing good multicultural literature, this will help teachers become more empowered to help their students broaden their understandings and their

learning. By empowering teachers to choose quality multicultural literature, we also empower our students with the responsibility to learn about other people, cultures, and themselves.

By having teachers learn how to choose and use quality multicultural literature, they can learn to create a classroom that is culturally compatible. Multicultural literature is one way to supplement a model of the culturally compatible classroom in terms of climate, work-style, communication, and learning styles (Banks, 1993). This blend can help students become more open to learning and school in general. It can open a door to getting to know your students better as well.

Teachers can also help empower their students by initiating some changes and looking at what ways they hinder or help their students and what kinds of attitudes they convey to students like and unlike themselves. They can begin to understand various power relationships in the classroom and how that power provides access to cultural knowledge; and they can determine if they are committed to notions of multiculturalism (Miller & McCaskill).

Without multicultural literature and education, students of color and majority students would not be able to relate to one another, feel pride in the accomplishments of different groups, question issues and concerns in their class and society and learn about the differences and similarities that make us who we are. We, as teachers, need to make sure that we are educating our students to

share and educate others about who they are and what they know. We need to make sure that we are empowering them to take responsibility for their learning. We need to make sure that we are showing our students how to be accepting and open to differences and to look beyond them to the similarities that we all share.

## Selected Children's Books for the Workshop

### Children's Literature

Bruchac, J. (1998). Heart of a chief. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers.

An eleven-year-old Penacook Indian boy living on a reservation faces his father's alcoholism, a controversy surrounding plans for a casino on a tribal island, and insensitivity toward Native Americans in his school and nearby town.

Choi, S. N. (1993). Halmoni and the picnic. Boston: Houghlin and Mifflin.

A Korean American girl's third grade class helps her newly arrived grandmother feel more comfortable with her new life in the United States.

Choi, S. N. (1991). The year of impossible goodbyes. Boston: Houghlin and 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.

Climo, S. (1993). The korean cinderella. New York: HarperCollins. In this version of Cinderella set in ancient Korea, Pear Blossom, a stepchild, eventually comes to be chosen by the magistrate to be his wife.

Goble, D. & Goble, P. (1972). Brave eagle's account of the fetterman fight, 21 December 1866. New York: Pantheon Books.

An account from the Indian point of view of the events of the worst defeat the United States Army suffered at the hands of the Indians.

Goble, P. (1994). Adopted by eagles. New York: Bradbury Press. Two friends go out hunting for horses--but only one returns--in this story based in the Lakota Indian tradition.

Goble, P. (1978). The girl who loved wild horses. New York: Bradbury Press.

Though she is fond of her people, a girl prefers to live among the wild horses where she is truly happy and free.

Goble, P. (1988). Her seven brothers. New York: Bradbury Press. Retells the Cheyenne legend in which a girl and her seven chosen brothers become the Big Dipper.

Goble, P. (1998). Iktomi and the coyote: a Plains Indian story. New York: Orchard Books. After tricking some prairie dogs into becoming his dinner, Iktomi is himself outwitted by Coyote.

Grossman, V. (1991). Ten little rabbits. San Francisco: Chronicle Books. A counting rhyme with illustrations of rabbits in Native American costume, depicting traditional customs such as rain dances, hunting, and smoke signals. Includes a glossary with additional information on the customs

Kalman, B. (1993). Mexico the culture. New York: Crabtree. This book looks at the ancient and modern culture of Mexico, including art, music, dance, and festivals.

Kalman, B. (1993). Mexico the land. New York: Crabtree. This book looks at the land of Mexico, including its history, regions, natural resources, wildlife, environmental problems, and transportation systems.

Mohr, N. (1986). Going home. New York: Puffin Books. Feeling like an outsider when she visits her relatives in Puerto Rico for the first time, eleven-year-old Felita tries to come to terms with the heritage she always took for granted.

Myers, W. D. (1992). Somewhere in the darkness. New York: Scholastic. A teenage boy accompanies his father, who has recently escaped from prison, on a trip that turns out to be a time of, often painful, discovery for them both.

Polacco, P. (1994). Pink and say. New York: Philomel Books. Say Curtis describes his meeting with Pinkus Aylee, a black soldier, during the Civil War, and their capture by Southern troops.

Ringgold, F. (1991). Tar beach. New York: Crown Publishers, Inc.  
A young girl dreams of flying above her Harlem home, claiming all she sees for herself and her family. Based on the author's quilt painting of the same name.

Stanke, M. (1995). I speak english for my mom. New York: Houghton Mifflin.

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.

Yep, L. (1991). The star fisher. New York: Puffin Books.  
Fifteen-year-old Joan Lee and her family find the adjustment hard when they move from Ohio to West Virginia in the 1920's.

## Resources for Teachers

Banks, J. A. (1997). Teaching strategies for ethnic studies. (6<sup>th</sup> edition). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Barrera, R. B. (1997). Kaleidoscope: A multicultural booklist for grades k-8. (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Cai, M. Lecture notes, February 5, 2001.

Dudley-Marling, C. (1997, Spring). "I'm not from Pakistan": Multicultural literature and the problem of representation". The New Advocate, 10, (2) 123-133.

Erickson, L.G. (1995). Supervision of literacy programs: Teachers as grassroots change agents. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Fang, Z., Fu, D., & Lamme, L. L. (1999, Summer). "Rethinking the role of multicultural literature in literacy instruction: Problems, paradox, and possibilities". The New Advocate, 12, (3) 259-276.

Harris, V. J. (1997). Using multiethnic literature in the k-8 classroom. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers, Inc.

Nichols, M. S. & O'Neill, P. (1997). Multicultural resources for children. Stanford, CA: Multicultural Resources.

Purves, A. C. (1993). Tapestry: A multicultural anthology. Edgewood Cliffs, NJ: Global Book Company.

Rasinski, T. V. & Padak, N. D. (1990, October). "Multicultural learning through children's literature". Language Arts, 67, 576-580.

Roberts, P. L. & Cecil, N. L. (1993). Developing multicultural awareness through children's literature: A guide for teachers and librarians, grades k-8. Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, Inc.

Schmidt, P. R. (1995). "Working and playing with others: Cultural conflict in a kindergarten literacy program". The Reading Teacher, 48,(5) 404-412.

Tiedt, P. L. & Tiedt, I. M. (1990). Multicultural teaching: a handbook of activities, information, and resources. (3<sup>rd</sup> edition). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

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Bank, J. A. (editor) (1993). Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

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Banks, J. A. (editor) (1996). Multicultural education: Transformative knowledge and action. New York: Teachers College Press.

Banks, J. A. (1993, September). "Multicultural education: Development, dimensions, and challenges". Phi Delta Kappan, 75 (1), 22-28.

Brandt, R. (1994, May). "On educating for diversity: A conversation with James A. Banks". Educational Leadership, 51 (8), 28-31.

Cai, M. (1995, Winter). "Can we fly across cultural gaps on the wings of imagination?: Ethnicity, experience, and cultural authenticity". The New Advocate, 8, (1) 1-16.

Cai, M. (1998, Fall). "Multiple definitions of multicultural literature: Is the debate really just "ivory tower" bickering?". The New Advocate, 11, (4) 311-324.

Current population reports, school enrollment in the United States--social and economic characteristics of students, p20-533, Issued March 2001.

Diaz, C. F.(editor) (2001). Multicultural education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. New York: Longman.

Dreyer, P. (editor) (1997). Literacy: Building on what we know. Claremont, CA: The Claremont Reading Conference.

Enciso, P. E. (1994, November). "Cultural identity and response to literature: Running lessons from *Maniac Magee*". Language Arts, 71, 524-533.

First, J. M. (1988, November). "Immigrant students in u.s. public schools: Challenges with solutions". Phi Delta Kappan, 70 (3), 205-210.

Garcia, J. (1993, September). "The changing image of ethnic groups in textbooks". Phi Delta Kappan, 75 (1), 29-35.

Hillard, L. L. (1995, May). "Defining the "multi-" in "multicultural" through children's literature". The Reading Teacher, 48 (8), 728-729.

Howard, G. R. (1993, September) "Whites in our roles". Phi Delta Kappan, 75 (1), 36-41.

Hynds, S. & Rubin, D. L. (1988). Perspectives on talk and learning. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

Kellogg, J. B. (1988, November). "Forces of change". Phi Delta Kappan, 70 (3), 199-204.

Ladson-Billing, G. (1991, May). "What we can learn from multicultural education research". Educational Leadership, 51 (8), 22-27.

Macphee, J. S. (1997, January). "That's not fair!": A white teacher reports on white first graders' responses to multicultural literature". Language Arts, 74, 33-40.

McKeon, D. (1994, May). "When meeting "common" standards is uncommonly difficult". Educational Leadership, 51 (8), 45-49.

Miller, S. M. & McCaskill, B. (editors) (1993). Multicultural literature and literacies: Making space for difference. New York: State University of New York Press.

Ostrowski, S. (1994, Fall). "Literature and multiculturalism: The challenge of teaching and learning about the literature of diverse cultures". Literature Update, 4 1-2.

Sacco, M. T. (1993,). "Enhancing multicultural literature by using the whole language approach in diverse settings while facing the censorship challenge". ED 361 689.

Smagorinsky, P. (1992, December). "Towards a civic education in a multicultural society: Ethnical problems in teaching literature". English Education, 24 (4), 212-228.

# Appendix

Appendix A :

Multicultural Books

Title\_\_\_\_\_

Author\_\_\_\_\_

Quality or Not Quality Literature

Why\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Description\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Objectives or Use\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Extension Activity

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Appendix B:

Book Title:

Author:

Important Information:

- 1.
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- 12.
- 13.
- 14.
- 15.
- 16.

Appendix C:

**Outline of Banks's Hierarchy:**

Contributing Model:

Additive Model:

Transformation & Decision Making/Action Model:

Appendix D:

**Evaluation Form:**

**Date:**

Describe one thing you were wanting to learn from the workshop.

Describe one thing you did learn from the workshop.

How will you use what you learned in your classroom?

Please list some things you liked about the workshop.

Please list some things that you did not like about the workshop.