

Building Bridges of Understanding through International Literature

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One of the trends in the field of children's and adolescent literature is the increasing availability of international books, the topic of the 2002 Master Class in Teaching Children's Literature. Many of these books come from other English-speaking countries, particularly England and Australia, an indication that the field still has a long way to go in opening up the world through literature. Small steps matter, however, and it is clear that gradually more books about a range of global cultures are becoming available.

These books are important because our lives are going global. Rapid economic, social, and technological changes connect us around the globe, so that knowledge of the world has become a necessity, not a luxury. The world in which children will live as adults will be fundamentally different from the world in which we grew up. The quickening pace of globalization has led to a context in which opportunities to succeed depend on global knowledge and skills, and yet many American students are ignorant of world cultures, international issues, and foreign languages. They often obtain their world knowledge through television and video games with an emphasis on conflict, catastrophe, terrorism, and war. Their understandings thus remain superficial, grounded in fear and stereotypes, leading to ethnocentrism and a lack of understanding about world cultures.

There are many ways of opening the world for children and adolescents, including technology, world language study, student exchange programs, and global studies. All of these are significant, but literature offers unique possibilities, in particular the opportunity for students to go beyond a tourist perspective of surface-level information about another culture. Literature invites readers to immerse themselves into story worlds to gain insights about how people live, feel, and think around the world—to develop emotional connections and empathy as well as knowledge. These connections go beyond the surface knowledge of food, dance, clothing, folklore, and facts about a country to the values and beliefs that lie at the core of each culture.

The goal of integrating international literature into classrooms and libraries is the same as multicultural literature—to challenge students to learn about, understand, and accept those different from themselves, thus breaking the cycles of oppression and prejudice between people of different cultures. As students read these books, they come to recognize the common feelings and needs they share with children around the world, as well as to value the unique differences that each culture adds to the richness of our world.

Literature provides a means of building bridges of understanding across countries and cultures. Through reading books from global cultures, students come to know their own culture as well as the world beyond their homes. They see how people of the world view themselves, not just how we view them. Opening the world through literature is not a new idea but has remained an elusive goal within most US schools and libraries. This chapter discusses some of the issues that have created obstacles to this goal as well as highlights, strategies, and resources for engaging teachers and students so that these books become integral to classroom life.

Challenges to the Integration of International Literature

The integration of international literature into classrooms remained an elusive goal for many years simply because there were so few books available. While international literature has always been present through well-loved characters such as Heidi, Pippi Longstocking, and Hans Brinker, their numbers were so small that they had little impact. Also, for many years, most of the books that were available about global cultures were so-called travel books, books written by Americans who traveled to a country for several weeks. These books were characterized by their superficiality and were often filled with stereotypes. Series books, for example, focused on characters such as the Bobbie Twins who traveled to "exotic" and "primitive" countries.

This context is quickly changing as increasing numbers of books are distributed in the United States from other countries and are written and published within the United States. A lack of familiarity with these books, however, continues to be a problem because they are a recent trend, and even award-winning international books are given little attention in schools and libraries. The ALA names the Batchelder award for the most distinguished translated book at the same time as the Newbery and Caldecott awards. This award has a 40-year history and yet still remains unknown to many teachers and librarians, receiving little publicity. Other award lists, such as the Outstanding International Book list

from the US section of IBBY (International Board of Books for Young People), struggle to gain recognition from publishers and educators.

Even the definition of *international literature* remains contentious. Some argue that the term should refer only to those books originally published for children in a country other than the United States in the language of that country and later republished in the United States (Tomlinson, 1999). *Global literature* is the preferred term for the broader body of books set in countries and cultures outside the United States, no matter where they were published. In this chapter, *global literature* and *international literature* will be used interchangeably to refer to the broader body of literature set in a specific global culture, no matter what the origin of the book. The origin of the book is significant to cultural authenticity; however, the increasing mobility of authors, who may live and work across several national settings, and the changing nature of the publishing industry, which leads to books being published first in the United States rather than the author's own country, have made these distinctions less useful in a global economy.

Definitions based on the origins of international literature connect to another challenge for educators about cultural authenticity of the books. Educators are often hesitant to use these books because they know that many are problematic and feel uncomfortable about their own knowledge of so many different global cultures. Examining the authorship of the broad body of international literature in the United States provides a better sense of the complexity of evaluating cultural authenticity (Fox & Short, 2003). The range of authorship includes the following:

1. Books written by authors/illustrators who are insiders to the culture they portray and who still reside within that culture. These books are typically published in the country of origin for the children of that country, and are then translated (if not written in English) and distributed in the United States. Examples are *Moribito* (Uehashi, 2008) and *Germann's Summer* (Hole, 2008). Some translated books, however, are not from the country being portrayed, such as *The Shadow of Chaddames* (Stolz, 2005), set in Libya but written by a French journalist.
2. Books written by authors/illustrators who are insiders to the culture they are portraying, but who now reside in the United States as their primary residence even though they return regularly to their country of origin. Sometimes their work is initially published in the United States. Examples are *Inkdarthi* (Funke, 2009), *Tasting the Sky* (Barakat, 2007), and *Just in Case* (Morales, 2008).

3. Books written by authors/illustrators who are immigrants to the United States and write about their country of origin. Some regularly return to their country of origin, while others left as children or young adults and rarely return, adding the complication that their writing may be based on memories of a country that no longer exists due to societal changes. Examples are *I Lost My Tooth in Africa* (Diakité, 2006), *Keeping Corner* (Sheth, 2007), and *Revolution Is Not a Dinner Party* (Compestone, 2007).

4. Books written by US authors/illustrators who draw from their family's heritage in their country of origin, but who were born and raised in the United States. These authors use family memories as well as engage in research. Examples are *When My Name Was Keoko* (Park, 2002) and *The Survivor Tree* (Engle, 2008).

5. Books written by US authors/illustrators who spend a significant period of time within a particular country, often working for some type of government or social agency or as journalists. Examples are *Colibri* (Cameron, 2005) and *Emmaway Home* (Kurtz, 2000).

6. Books written by US authors/illustrators who research a particular country and who may or may not visit that country as part of that research. Examples are *When Heaven Fell* (Marsden, 2007) and *Balarama* (Lewin & Lewin, 2009).

7. Books written by an author who is an outsider to the culture but who collaborates with an insider to strengthen authenticity. For example, Elizabeth Laird, a British author, collaborated with Sonia Nimr, a Palestinian archaeologist, storyteller, and author from Ramallah, the location of their book, *A Little Piece of Ground* (2006).

Another major challenge involves uncertainties about how to effectively use international books with students, given that many contain unfamiliar stylistic devices and terminology and the experiences and settings in the books, at first glance, seem far removed from students' lives. Students often resist narratives that have linguistic or cultural practices that are difficult for them to understand (Bond, 2006). Educators struggle with how to support students in making significant connections to these books to move their responses beyond viewing other cultures as exotic or strange. Some unintentionally adopt strategies that are tangential or even in opposition to the goals of global education by promoting *we/ them* dualisms and highlighting superficial aspects of cultural lifestyles that reinforce rather than challenge stereotypes (Fang, Fu, & Lamme, 2003). Simply reading about the world can actually negatively influence the development of intercultural understanding (Case, 1993).

Creating Intercultural Understanding through International Literature

Courses and workshops on international literature for teachers and librarians have become increasingly popular in recent years in response to the growing availability of these books and the emerging interest in global education. Because of the complex issues that surround these books, these courses must go beyond immersing educators in the literature. Becoming familiar with international books is a first step in a much more complicated process of challenging educators to consider issues of cultural authenticity and the types of engagements with these books that build intercultural understanding, not stereotypes.

Montero and Robertson (2006) examined the issues that inhibit and encourage teachers to use international and global children's literature in their classrooms through analysis of data from their university course. They found that teachers gained an understanding of the use of interpretive, rather than literal, translation and the resulting variation in translation quality as well as developed the ability to engage in critical analysis of cultural authenticity. Teachers came to realize the need to interrogate the stereotypes and assumptions that they bring to a text and the need to gain background information on the country, culture, perspective, and time period of a book. They also became aware that even when they considered themselves knowledgeable about a country, their perspectives as cultural outsiders often did not allow them to see the cultural nuances and richness identified by a cultural insider within a particular book. While many began the course believing they needed to gain a certain authority to teach literature in an unfamiliar culture, they gradually realized that a reader response approach and knowledge of available resources allows them to learn alongside their students. They also became aware of the significance of promoting an equity pedagogy for their classrooms.

My graduate course on international literature is structured around the same curricular framework that has emerged in my research with international literature in a K-5 elementary school that has a schoolwide focus on global inquiry through literature and the arts (Short, 2009). This framework (see Figure 8.1) highlights multiple ways of engaging with international literature to support readers' critical explorations of their own cultural identities, in-depth studies of specific cultural ways of living, the integration of diverse cultural perspectives across the curriculum, and inquiries into complex global issues.

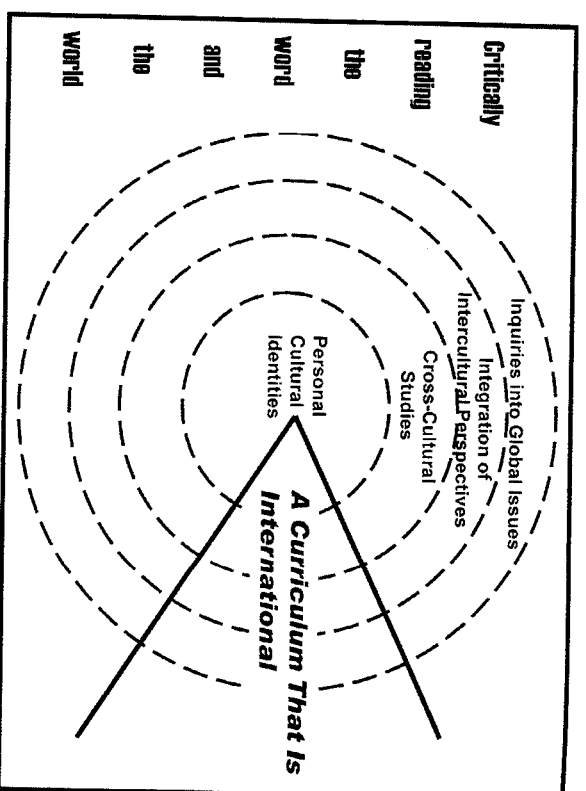


Figure 8.1: A curriculum that is international.

Exploring Personal Cultural Identities

The course begins with an exploration of our personal cultural identities to build a conceptual understanding of culture and to provide strong personal connections for the teachers and librarians in the course. Educators create identity intersections to examine the different cultural aspects of their identities, including language, religion, gender, social class, ethnicity, race, age, family structures, region and nationality, community, and education (Foss, 2002). The purpose of this engagement is to challenge teachers to consider a definition of culture that goes beyond ethnicity so that everyone sees themselves as cultural beings. If culture is only defined as ethnicity and as something only a few possess, culture becomes an "add-on" to the curriculum or something exotic, rather than integral to who we are as human beings. Geertz (1973) says that culture is "the shared patterns that set the tone, character, and quality of people's lives" (p. 216). These shared patterns go beyond external characteristics to include the values, symbols, interpretations, and perspectives held by a group of people. Culture is a way of being in the world through a design for living that involves systems of acting, believing, and valuing.

One aspect of their cultural identities that many Americans overlook or ignore is that of nationality, and, since the course focuses on international literature, we look specifically at nationality as one aspect of identity. Typically, the educators in the course are from local schools as well as other countries. Each person finds a partner from the same region in the United States or country and creates a chart where they record insider and outsider perspectives on how people within that culture look and think (see Figure 8.2). This chart creates tension-filled discussions as they wrestle with the stereotypes that others have about their nationality or region and with reducing their own sense of the diversity within their country into short phrases.

To continue their exploration of culture, I ask class members to bring to the next class session visual and symbolic representations (collages, maps, artifacts, etc.) of how they are international in their lives and identities. We share these in small groups and set up museum displays. We also discuss books where characters move across cultures, such as *Habibi* (Nye, 1999) and *Hinnah's Winter* (Meehan, 2009), in small-group literature circles, focusing first on personal responses and then on how the character's identity changes in moving across global cultures and the ways in which the character is international. Other engagements that encourage educators to examine their cultural identities include cultural X-rays, cultural identity maps, and collections of artifacts that reflect the different aspects of each person's cultural identity.

These discussions lead us into a class debate about the definition of international literature and its value for readers. Small groups web their understandings of what it means to have an international perspective and then create a diamond ranking, putting internationalism at the top of their diamond and selecting eight words/characteristics they consider essential to defining internationalism. These words are arranged into a diamond shape (1, 2, 3, 2, 1) from most valued to least valued. This process takes them from thinking broadly about internationalism as they brainstorm web to debating about how to select what is of most significance for this perspective.

We then move into professional readings about internationalism and international literature using *Global Perspectives in Children's Literature* (Freeman & Lehman, 2001) and a range of articles. In my courses, I often ask students to first develop their own definitions and connections before they move into professional readings to encourage a more critical interaction with the readings and to help them uncover their current understandings and misconceptions. Another focus of the professional reading is on interculturalism as an attitude of mind, an orientation that pervades thinking so that diverse cultural perspectives are woven throughout the curriculum and school life, instead of being a special book or unit. In particular, we look at the work of European theorists such as

Singapore young nation	looks like	Thinks like
Chinese short dark boring	like	rigid conservative fines approachable easy to get around/language
Insider	multi racial Indians Malays Chinese Others inter-marriages heights with refreshing mixture	Tolerance, high standard of living Food paradise & shopping Multicultural celebration "One people, one nation, one Singapore" Clean (environment) safe, easy transportation, MODERN

	United States of America	
Outsider	Looks Like	Thinks like
Insider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - jeans, t-shirt - Flip-Flops - baseball cap - casually-dressed - overweight - multicultural 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - too proud!! way too proud - ignorent (does not think outside of their "culture") - racist-do not accept other cultures - the people do on shows such as "Next Day, My Men, etc" that are seen on TV

Figure 8.2: Charts of insider/outsider perspectives on national identities. See "Wow Stories" on the Worlds of Words website (www.wowlit.org) for other examples of classroom work.

Fennes and Hapgood (1997), Hofstede (1991), and Allan (2003) who use the term *interculturalism* to refer to understandings and relationships of diverse cultural groups that cross outside the boundaries of countries. They view *multiculturalism* as an American term referring to relationships between diverse microcultures within a country. Based on my own reading of these theorists, I have framed the course around interculturalism as an orientation that includes the following:

- Understanding one's personal cultural identity
- Building a conceptual understanding of culture and perspective
- Valuing the unique perspectives and common humanity of diverse cultural groups
- Critiquing the inequities and injustices experienced by specific cultural groups
- Developing a commitment to taking action for a more just and equitable world

We also read several novels, including recent Batchelder Award winners, in literature circles, focusing on the ways in which the character's cultural identity is revealed, such as *The Shadow of Ghadames* (Stolz, 2004), *The Cross-Girl* (Bredsdorff, 2004), *Daniel Half Human and the Good Nazi* (Chofewitz, 2004), *Samir and Yonatan* (Carmi 2000), and *The Friends* (Yumoto, 1996). We also create a list of issues to consider related to international literature, such as availability, authenticity, and translation. These issues cut across our readings throughout the course with the goal that class members will gradually build more complex understandings about how these issues play out in the literature, leading to a more focused examination of the issues at the end of the course.

Cross-Cultural Studies

These initial engagements provide educators with a theoretical frame on culture and interculturalism as well as a sense of their own cultural identities and the cultural ways of thinking they bring to life and to responding to literature. To encourage them to move beyond their own perspectives to consider the range of perspectives in the world, we move into an extended study of literature from a range of global cultures. Cross-cultural studies involve an in-depth study of a particular culture to gain a sense of the diversity and complexity within that culture. These studies have often taken the form of stereotypical country studies that focus on the surface aspects of culture, referred to as the 5Fs curriculum—

food, fashion, folklore, famous people, and festivals. We used an adapted version of the iceberg model of culture (Fennes & Hapgood, 1997) to uncover the ways in which this curriculum does not engage learners in the deep structure of culture—the core values and beliefs (see Figure 8.3).

The iceberg concept of culture is an important metaphor for reflecting on our responses to literature and understandings of a culture as well as for evaluating the portrayals of a culture within particular pieces of literature. The surface aspects are significant to that culture and are often an easy place to begin a cultural study but can easily lead to stereotypes unless the study moves into the deeper values and beliefs of that culture. We use blank models of the iceberg to label our current understandings of a particular culture, either individually or in small groups.

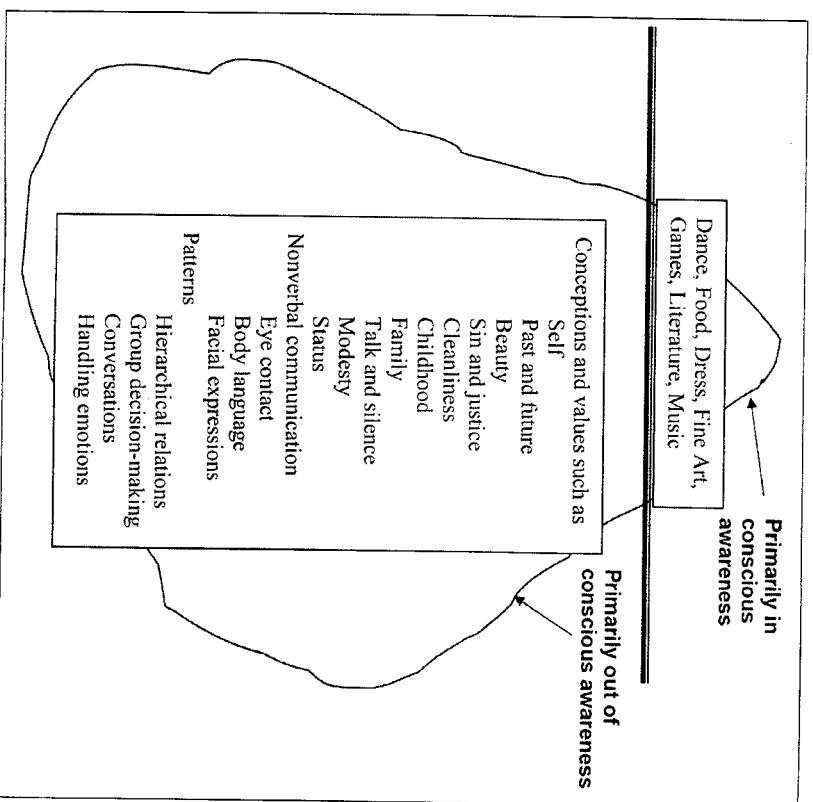


Figure 8.3: Iceberg concept of culture.

One major issue that often emerges is the need to continuously remind ourselves not to use our own cultural perspective as the “norm” against which we view and evaluate other perspectives. Educators find it relatively easy to consider and value other points of view beyond their own but fall into the trap of seeing their perspective as the “norm” instead of recognizing that their perspective is only one of many ways to view the world. The labels of “other” and “different” both assume that my view is the norm against which I judge another perspective.

The first time that I taught a course on international literature, we took on a different continent each evening, meeting in literature circles for small-group discussions of books from that part of the world and reading *Bookbird* articles written by authors from those cultures. This broad survey of literature from the world was interesting, and a range of perspectives and writing styles were evident in both the professional and children’s literature. The struggle for me was the feeling that we were staying at the tip of the iceberg instead of digging more deeply.

The value of a cross-cultural study is the opportunity to focus deeply on one culture to understand its complexity and diversity, so the next time I taught the course we engaged in an in-depth study of Korean culture for several weeks. We read and discussed *When My Name Was Keoko* by Linda Sue Park (2002) about her parents’ experiences during the Japanese occupation of Korea during World War II. We responded to this book in a range of ways, including creating cultural X-rays of characters to show the external features of culture that were visible to others as well as the internal values and beliefs within the heart of that person. We compared the perspectives in this book to two other books from the same time period, *So Far from the Bamboo Grove* (Watkins, 1993), a memoir by the child of a Japanese officer in Korea, and *Year of Impossible Goodbyes* (Choi, 1991), a memoir of a North Korean child. Comparing the perspectives in these three novels provided strong evidence that authors’ life experiences influence the stories that they tell. In addition, we created a jackdaw—a box of information—including newspaper articles, maps, photographs, and artifacts relating to the time period and events in these books. Each person took an issue or event that intrigued him or her and did further research on the Internet to identify an artifact to share and add to our jackdaw. Jackdaws are a teaching tool that connects historical books with real events of the time through concrete objects (Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 2007).

We also browsed and read picture books about Korea published in the United States and compared these with picture books from South Korea. An international student from South Korea shared her collection of picture books currently being published in that country and talked about her analysis of these books

and the changes in literature for children within South Korea. This experience brought to the forefront the problem of the dominance of folklore and historical fiction in books available in the United States, resulting in outdated images of life in that country, as compared to the many contemporary images of life in the South Korean books. It also led to discussions about translated books and the issue of which books are chosen for translation into English and who makes that decision.

We ended our study by looking at the Begler (1998) model, which provides a frame for examining the complex factors involved within any culture. This model indicates that all cultures exist within a historical context that shapes the cultural forms and systems, and this historical context operates within a larger geographical context that involves constant interaction and adaptation. Begler also argues that all cultures serve five basic sets of functions—economic, social, political, aesthetic, and values/beliefs. These values and beliefs shape behavioral norms and provide meaning to human activity within cultures. We made a poster-sized version of this model and recorded our current understandings about Korean culture on sticky notes, placing them on the model to gain a sense of what we understood and what was still missing from our understandings.

Class members worked with partners on their own cross-cultural studies, choosing a particular global culture to research and to gather children’s and adolescent literature from both insider and outsider perspectives. Based on their reading of the literature and professional sources, they created annotated bibliographies of recommended books, which they shared with classmates. These projects were shared through displays of the books and short introductions to the displays followed by time for browsing and discussion.

Integration of Intercultural Perspectives Across the Curriculum

While the study of a specific culture can add depth to understandings about that culture, the danger still exists that international literature will be seen as restricted to special units rather than as an integral part of classroom life. Since my goal is for educators to see the value of this literature in creating an intercultural orientation, they need to explore how these books can be woven into any content area and unit of study. We particularly focus on the use of text sets, each containing 10–15 conceptually related picture books or novels reflecting a range of genres and perspectives (Short, 1993). I bring in examples of text sets around themes that contain picture books about experiences within the United States and in global contexts, such as sets on sharing family stories, dealing with death and loss, explorations of the moon, variants of Cinderella, and journeys of change. Class members browse all of the sets and then choose one set to read

more closely and discuss in small groups, using graffiti boards to record their thinking as they read.

Educators then choose a theme or topic that is significant within their curriculum and puts together a text set that includes picture books from a range of global cultures. We also look at a broad concept, such as journeys, with each person reading a different novel from various cultures related to that theme. Class members come together in small groups to share and compare the types of journeys across their books. We also explore particular tools for response that are effective with text sets, including graffiti boards and comparison charts.

The focus on integration of international literature throughout the curriculum raises the issue of resources to support educators in locating high-quality literature from a range of global cultures. We take the time to closely examine resources on international literature, including annotated bibliographies from USBBY (Gebel, 2006), websites with databases such as Worlds of Words (<http://www.iit.org>), journals such as *Bookbird* (<http://tbody.org>), and annual award lists such as the USBBY Outstanding International Books (www.usbby.org) and the Batchelder (www.ala.org).

Inquires into Global Issues

James Banks (2001) argues that although racial harmony is one goal of multiculturalism, the roots of this movement are in the critique of issues of power and oppression. A critique of inequity and a call for social justice are not an add-on but central to multicultural education. Interculturalism shares this focus on critiquing the ways that power and oppression have affected various cultural groups around the world, and so global inquiries into difficult social and political issues are essential to a curriculum that is international. These issues include violence, human rights, environmental degradation, language loss, poverty, discrimination, and economic imperialism (Collins, Czarra, & Smith, 1998). The inquiries created around these global issues focus on the local and global complexity of the issue and go beyond talk about books to considering ways of taking action in the world.

Several years ago, my class engaged in a short inquiry around the global issue of genocide, using books about the Holocaust in World War II along with newspaper articles about current instances of genocide around the world. Class members browsed the collection of books and then met in small groups to discuss their experience within the context of a professional article in which a teacher reflected on her use of books about genocide (Zack, 1996). I also shared my experiences working with K-5 students on a human rights inquiry and Grade

4/5 students on an inquiry around prejudice. The use of books that raise difficult social and political issues with students prompted an intense discussion among class members and different levels of comfort in facilitating these experiences with students.

Critically Reading the Word and the World

A critical stance on issues of power, oppression, and social justice is woven through all of these curriculum components, not just our focus on the use of literature within inquiries on global issues. Without that critical stance, referred to by Freire (1970) as critically reading the word and the world, these experiences could easily become a superficial tour of culture where educators learn *about* internationalism. They might pick up information about a range of global cultures based on the view that if we just knew more about each other's culture, we would have global harmony. This approach does not consider difficult issues of inequity and social justice and does not recognize the race, class, and gender matters in how we interpret and analyze our experiences in the world as well as in the texts we read. Freire (1970) argues that a critical stance involves questioning "what is" and considering "what if" to take action.

Within this course, I see this critical stance as the continuous integration of cultural issues, such as availability, authenticity, and translation, into each set of engagements and books. We debate issues of availability, particularly which global cultures and genres are and are not well represented in the books available in the United States; translation, particularly the details of a culture that are changed or deleted during translation and the Americanization of books to make them more marketable; and cultural authenticity, particularly the types of stereotypes found in books from particular cultures and the perspectives authors bring to their work based on their life experiences. These issues are introduced early in the course and woven throughout our experiences with literature. We return to these issues from a more focused critical perspective during the last several weeks of the course through reading scholarly discussions in the professional literature. Our earlier discussions are based on observations from our browsing and literature circles, and these experiences provide a strong base from which to consider scholarly arguments about authenticity and translation. Other issues that can be discussed include the state of children's literature around the world, the process of how books get published and brought to a particular country, evaluation of international literature, and trends (Hancock, 2003).

Barbara Lehman discussed at the 2002 Master Class how she uses book pairs to highlight these issues, for example, having class members read *Nory Ryan's*

Song by Giff (2000), an American writer of Irish ancestry, along with *Under the Hawthorn Tree* by Conlon-McKenna (1990), an Irish writer, to discuss issues of insider-outsider perspectives (Hancock, 2003). Another example is pairing *Fasting the Sky*, a memoir by Itzisan Barakat (2007) about her own childhood, with *The Sheppard's Granddaughter*, by Anne L. Carter (2008), a Canadian, to discuss Palestinian/Israeli conflicts. Montero and Robertson (2006) highlighted these same issues through a cross-cultural reader-response exchange that involved international students from the university who volunteered to join the class for this particular engagement. Novels that were set in the countries of these students were located. Each class member chose one book to read and respond to and then met with the international student who had also read that book as an insider for an in-depth discussion. Class members were asked to research the literacy education and culture of the country that was the focus of their book and to write a reflection on the cross-cultural dialogue as their culminating project for the course.

During the final class session in my course, we return to the curriculum framework and reflect on our course experiences to consider how to engage students in their classrooms and libraries. Having lived through these experiences with international literature and not just read *about* these books, class members have a strong sense of the ways in which these experiences influence understandings of interculturalism and curriculum. Particular literature engagements such as reading aloud from a picture book to establish our class focus, browsing to gain a broad sense of a particular group of books, engaging in literature discussions to deeply consider a particular novel or picture book, discussing a text set to compare perspectives, and the use of a broad range of tools for responding to literature cut across all of our class sessions. Because of my own research in classrooms, I also share examples of student artifacts and dialogue to introduce particular response strategies or literature engagements throughout the course.

What varies is the focus of our class sessions on different aspects of the curricular model including personal cultural identity, an in-depth understanding of a particular culture, the integration of a range of global perspectives, and an inquiry into a difficult global issue. These shifts create different understandings about culture, perspective, and action and result in quite different conversations. Class members gain a sense not only of the many different books available but also the need for a balance across these different ways of grouping and using literature with readers to build intercultural understanding.

The options for class members' final inquiry projects are open-ended so that they can each choose an inquiry that is compelling for them. Some choose to do an in-depth critical analysis of a particular group of books on a culture or theme,

some take on a particular issue such as translation, others examine award-winning books from a range of countries or choose a particular author or illustrator for an in-depth study, and still others engage their own students in responding to a set of international books or write their own story around a specific cultural experience from their lives. Our last two class sessions usually consist of presenting these projects in displays and in conference sessions to small groups of class members.

We end the semester by returning back to our personal cultural identities. Class members create personal text sets of 5 to 10 books that reflect their intercultural connections as global citizens—their sense of place in the world. We share these through browsing all of the text sets in displays and then share more personally in small groups.

Conclusion

Engagements with international and global literature open the potential for transforming readers' perspectives through thoughtful dialogue and responses to these books. These interactions invite educators and students to reflect on their own cultural experiences and to imagine global experiences that go beyond themselves. All readers need to find their lives reflected in books, but if what they read only mirrors their own views of the world, they cannot envision alternative ways of thinking and living and are not challenged to confront global issues. Creating a curriculum that is international offers educators and students the potential to build bridges of understanding across cultures and thus transform their lives and views of the world. The challenge is to find ways to open up safe spaces that invite educators to experience the power of this literature for themselves so that they, in turn, take the risk of inviting their students to join with them in building bridges across global cultures.

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