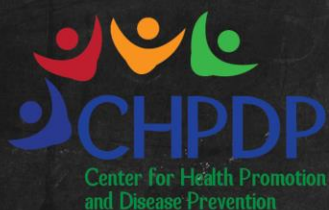


Using Literature to Promote CULTURAL COMPETENCE

A Bullying Prevention Companion Bibliography

**Volume II:
Grades K-12**

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Portions of the *Introduction* were adapted with permission from Olweus Bullying Prevention Program Companion Bibliography for Grades K-12 (2009) by Nancy L. Mullin. Pittsburgh, PA: Highmark Foundation.

This bibliography is one of the many resources for teachers, parents and community members that have been developed through the Highmark Foundation to address bullying, with the ultimate goal of making students safe at school (click [here](#) to search their site view and download titles) or visit the following websites: <http://www.highmarkfoundation.org/publications/index.shtml>
<http://www.bullyingpreventioninstitute.org/>

After you have had a chance to read through the Bibliography and begin to use it in your classroom or with students, please take a moment to provide us with feedback about this resource. The survey will take about 8-10 minutes to complete. This online survey is important to our work. It will help us improve the Bibliography and develop future projects. Thank you for your time.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/culturalcompetence9>

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“A child who reads becomes an adult who thinks.”

Anonymous

Literature inspires, challenges, motivates and comforts us. It offers us companionship, validation, insight, knowledge and understanding. But perhaps most important: literature can provide a glimpse of life beyond our own experiences and offer us hope! That hope nurtures a vision of new and better ways of being. When paired with the insights we gain about ourselves and others, hope can empower us to improve and change our own lives, but also to make our world a better place. Education, and the power of books in particular, can spark changes that lead to a more equitable and peaceful world—a fact eloquently expressed by teen Malala Yousafzai in her July 2013 speech to the UNⁱ.

Schools, and all adults who care about young people, share a responsibility to create caring and safe learning environments that are respectful and welcoming not just for some, or even a majority of students, but for all. As educators, we have the opportunity to guide and motivate students to go beyond what is comfortable and familiar: to think about “big picture” concepts and issues that matter, but that can be difficult to talk about. Having these challenging conversations with students is crucial to their development as culturally competent world citizens who aren’t afraid to ask questions, who can think critically and independently, and who have the tools and motivation to improve their own lives, and the lives of others. As part of that process, students of all ages need safe forums in which they can ask questions and share their own experiences, attitudes and feelings. Literature becomes a tool that allows young people to become deeply and thoughtfully engaged in conversations about difficult or emotionally-charged topics they may lack the skills to discuss.

This new bibliography is an extension of the work and commitment the Highmark Foundation has placed on bullying prevention over the past decade. This new document addresses the growing need that schools and teachers have for additional student literature and adult resources about broader social issues that are often related to bullying. This bibliography is intended to complement Highmark Foundation’s original 2009 publication [*The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program Companion Bibliography for Grades K-12*](#)ⁱ. While that edition focuses almost exclusively on themes related to bullying and bullying prevention, this new volume addresses bullying from a human rights perspective, and introduces new literature focused on social issues related to building students’ cultural competence. Because the two bibliographies provide complementary listings (rather than duplicating or simply updating them), teachers are encouraged to use them together, as a set, to get the greatest benefit. Both documents are available as free downloads in [PDF](#)ⁱⁱ format and are recommended to be used in conjunction with academic curricula in the classroom.

A good bibliography rests on the strength and variety of available literature—and its usefulness depends on the ability to access the resources it lists. I considered it a great responsibility to select books that represented a variety of cultural viewpoints, that would resonate with a broad base of students, that had teaching value, and that represented best practices in both multicultural education and bullying prevention. I encountered some interesting challenges in the process. First, there continues to be a lack of published books for students of all ages reflecting the faces and experiences of students of color, students who are poor, students who are gender non-conforming, students who are disabled, etc., and even fewer that offer marginalized students a vision of a life filled with possibilities (i.e., many focus on

i <http://www.bullyingprebentioninstitute.org/>

ii <http://www.bullyingpreventioninstitute.org/>

particular periods in history, such as slavery in the US, the Holocaust, the Civil Rights Movement, or wars, or various urban problems such as homelessness, drugs, teen pregnancy and violence). To paraphrase illustrator Christopher Myers: students need to see themselves reflected in literature, but they also need concrete “roadmaps” that give them direction to make better lives for themselves than the ones they may be living. Additionally, remarkably few children’s books are written and illustrated by people of color, though some positive changes are occurring on that front. As a consequence, this bibliography reflects those limitations and should not be considered a definitive resource on either multicultural issues or cultural competence.

It is my sincere hope you find this to be a useful tool in your classrooms, and that the resources contained here help you to continue to create safe, caring and welcoming environments for your students. Remember: books inspire students to aspire to be their best selves, and also help them to visualize a world where everyone is valued and treated with dignity.

Nancy L. Mullin, M.Ed.
(August, 2014)

“Literacy is a bridge from misery to hope.”

Kofi Annan (Ghanaian diplomat and former UN Secretary-General)

Challenges

Readers of all ages deserve to have books that depict characters that look and sound like them, that describe life-experiences they can relate to, and that accurately depict cultural and socio-economic situations like their own. Young people should have access to literature that challenges them to reflect on their own experiences, relationships and events in their lives, and that offers examples of hopeful possibilities for their futures.

To become culturally competent adults who value and respect others, every student *also* must have opportunities to learn about and understand the lives and views of people whose races, ethnicities, nationalities, religions, family structures, immigration status, abilities, communities, genders, and sexual orientations differ from their own. Carefully selected, developmentally appropriate literature can give them access to authentic voices that communicate a wide range of emotions, attitudes, and experiences beyond those that are familiar to them. In addition to opening windows on aspects of the world they may never have a chance to experience first-hand, students are more likely to express empathy towards others when they are exposed to different perspectives and then given the opportunity and guidance to process that new information with others. For some students, particularly those who live in poverty, school may be their single point of free access to books. For many students, schools may be the only place where they have an opportunity to learn about people, ideas and experiences beyond their own—or to be encouraged to go beyond superficial images to develop informed ideas that will help them function in a diverse society.

Introducing young children in preschool and early elementary grades to literature that promotes diversity, equity and human rights, reinforces developmental tasks they are trying to master (such as forming self-identity, making friends, building self-awareness and awareness of the needs of others, and developing communication and social skills, social problem-solving abilities, empathy and perspective-taking, to name just a few). Older youth and teens benefit from literature that encourages them to explore interpersonal relationships and ways of resolving issues or conflicts, and meeting challenges with resilience. Those experiences reinforce developmental tasks such as improving relational problem-solving skills, fostering empathy and altruism, and persevering in the face of resistance or adversity; it uses teachable moments to create a positive tone and school climate, ensuring that all students feel safe and welcome.

Schools across our nation struggle to create climates that engage and retain minority students. Unfortunately, research consistently shows that schools tend not to be welcoming places for culturally different students^{2,3}, causing students of color to have lower academic achievement and to drop out earlier than their peers^{4,5}. According to a 2013 report from the US Department of Education, while graduation rates are at an all-time high (78%), those who drop out from school are overwhelmingly students from minority groups (e.g. 7% Native American, 6% Black, 5% Hispanic, and 2% Asian, compared to 2% White)⁶.

Although no single solution is likely to change that, creating school climates that are more responsive to the needs of minority and culturally different students is a start. Cultivating cultural competence in all students is one strategy that many experts believe is at the heart of this^{7,8,9}. While ethnic demographics in the US are undergoing significant changes¹⁰ (in 2012, the U.S. Census projected that by 2060, “the non-Hispanic White population will remain the largest single group, but no group will be in the

majority”¹¹), the cultural dynamics shaped by our current mainstream (or ‘dominant’) culture have not kept pace (see *Glossary* for definition and explanation of ‘Dominant Culture’ and ‘Marginalized Groups’). As a result, members of the dominant culture, often lack awareness about how institutional biases, personal privileges, and how those biases are communicated contribute to stereotyping others and discriminatory behaviors that compound the disconnection culturally-different students and their families can feel¹². As part of our efforts to help all students develop cultural competence, it is essential that we address the experiences of individuals who are vulnerable to being marginalized along with the role the predominant culture has in shaping those experiences; clearly, it is also imperative to include opportunities for open discussions to problem-solve pathways to change.

What is Cultural Competence?

Currently, there is no single definition for cultural competence and the definition is still evolving and being refined.¹³ The term has varied meanings for different people and organizations, often depending on the context in which it is used (e.g. workplace guidelines, teacher training, international business relations, etc.)—definitions range from developing an appreciation of one’s own cultural heritage to being able to assimilate/function within the dominant or mainstream culture. For the purposes of this bibliography, the following definition of cultural competence is suggested as most relevant for the classroom (and as a potential goal for students):

Cultural competence is the ability to successfully interact and work together with others who come from life/social experiences different from our own.

This definition is deliberately broader than many definitions of cultural competence used in US education (i.e., it goes beyond race and ethnicity) and incorporates ideas from the international and business communities to include a broader perspective about culture, socio-economic class, identity and human rights. The intent of this definition is not to diminish the role that race and culture play in our world, but to acknowledge that additional aspects of diversity also impact relationships at school, work, and society as a whole. In our increasingly global society, all students can benefit from learning to get along with others in the broadest sense possible.

Historically, many programs designed to foster cultural competence in US schools have focused on race, ethnicity and cultural identity (particularly for Black Americans), and are based on links to the Civil Rights Movement. The result of those social changes altered education and curriculum theory in profound ways that have led to advancements in teaching strategies and materials that are more sensitive to cultural diversity. Approaches have ranged from multicultural education, ethnic and racial studies, to women’s studies, diversity training, inclusion, immersion, English as a Second Language (ESL) programs, and cultural literacy—all predecessors to the current cultural competence movement.

Though progress has been made towards achieving racial equality, and the demographics for people of color continue to increase and diversify, issues of racial bias still exist in every stratum in our society. That holds true in literature as well. In 2012, fewer than 8% of the 3600 books received at the Cooperative Children’s Book Center of the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Education were about people of color; the following year (in 2013), the Center found that of the 3,200 books they surveyed (out of an estimated 5,000 books published), only 93 were about African-Americans^{14,15}. In reviewing book for this bibliography, it was notable that many of the books with characters of color

focused on topics like slavery, the Civil Rights Movement, workers rights, and so-called “urban problems” (such as poverty, homelessness, drug use, teen pregnancy, and gun and gang violence). This is one of the reasons why many literacy advocates, educators and authors of color claim that existing literature fails to offer students of color a vision of possibilities, not just of who of who they now, but who they can become^{16,17}.

However, if we expect students to be truly culturally competent, we also need to look beyond race. It is not only people of color who are marginalized and stereotyped in our society (or in how they are reflected in literature). Researchers and others point to women’s rights as a central issue of our time¹⁸, and cite the links between racism and discrimination based on gender¹⁹. The view that women are inferior to men is prevalent throughout many cultures and nations, including our own. These views are also not restricted to one religion or belief system. While not a minority in terms of population, women and girls are prevented from playing a full and equal role in many aspects of world society—including receiving and education, which the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child²⁰ cites as a fundamental human right (sections 23, 28, and 29). This is also reflected in a pervasive and persistent imbalance in how gender is depicted in children’s literature. In 2007, researchers at Kentucky’s Centre College found no reduced sexism in then-current children’s books, compared to those published between 1980-2000²¹. Even when they are depicted as animals (as is common in picture books for young children), the main characters and illustrations remain predominantly male—by a 2:1 ratio, according to a 2011 Florida State University study²².

Discrimination based on gender also contributes to the marginalization of individuals who do not conform to gender-role stereotypes or accepted norms (which vary by culture). For example, while US Census Data shows a growing trend of families headed by same-sex parents^{23,24} and the American Psychological Association has found no difference in the physical or mental health outcomes of children raised in LGBT versus heterosexual households²⁵, these families are rarely depicted in student literature. Most literature reflects the prevailing point of view which assumes that characters are (and should be) heterosexual. In response, the literature and resources offered in this bibliography address both gender and gender orientation as part of a broader interpretation of sources of marginalization, discrimination, and oppression.

Classrooms have changed in a variety of other ways that affect how adults and students perceive and interact with each other and with their peers. Since 1975, US students with disabilities (many of whom were previously excluded from school), have been integrated into mainstream classrooms. The number of students receiving support from federally-funded programs for the disabled was approximately 13% of total school enrollment for the 2009-2010 school year.²⁶ According to a 2011 joint report by World Health Organization and the World Bank, more than 1 billion people around the world (approximately 15%) live with disabilities, and that number is on the rise.²⁷ Worldwide, disabilities are more common among the poor and women, and have a significant negative impact on individual’s health, education, and economic participation (and they experience higher rates of poverty than people without disabilities). While people with disabilities are integrated into US society as never before, they are still among the groups often marginalized and “invisible.” A 2012 report from White House Task Force on Americans with Disabilities emphasized the need to address ongoing discrimination against disabled individuals and to implement social changes that improve the way we value their contributions along with those of all citizens and residents²⁸. While millions of American children are in mainstreamed education programs, they are still not adequately (or positively) presented in the two most popular children’s magazines (Highlights for Children and Sesame Street Magazine); the most recent study about this issue is almost twenty years old (1996) and at the time found only ten of 500 award winning children’s novels published between 1987 and 1991 had a disabled character; of that, only six featured a disabled person as the central character²⁹.

While books by and about disabled individuals is on the rise, and are included in this bibliography, research continues to link issues of able-ism with gender and racial bias, highlighting the need to continue to include accurate representations of individuals with disabilities as part of our efforts to promote diversity, acceptance, and cultural competence.

Why Is Cultural Competence Important?

Bias based on gender; social/socio-economic class and privilege; gender orientation, sexual preference, and gender identity; mental, physical and emotional ability/disability; physical appearance (most notably obesity); and religion are frequently at the center of bullying and discrimination in schools. Improving knowledge and competence in these areas can help students function more effectively academically, and in their employment and personal relationships. Though awareness about cultural diversity has improved over the past decade, some misconceptions and biases persist—even some scholarly papers continue to promote stereotypes such as the idea that most minority students are poor and/or that they are predominantly located in urban areas.

Institutions like schools have an inherent obligation to promote human rights and to establish a climate and infrastructure where all forms of abuse and victimization are prohibited. The multiple layers of diversity in today's classrooms present both challenges and opportunities for teachers and students alike. As with bullying prevention initiatives in school, programs that promote cultural competence should be viewed as part of a developmental process for students and adults alike. That means that results of our efforts to create changes with individuals and across a school community happen slowly and over time.

Systemically, this process requires teaching specific skills and providing information and positive role models; individually, it requires self-reflection, learning, and practice to achieve mastery—a process which ideally continues to evolve over one's lifetime. To begin this work, we each have to acknowledge that our individual life experiences have shaped our personal attitudes—and ultimately, contribute to biases about which we may be unaware. Changing those attitudes, beliefs, and biases begins with a four-part process that includes 1) building cultural knowledge about ourselves and others, 2) developing awareness and sensitivity to the life experiences of others, 3) self-awareness, including examining our own beliefs, attitudes and behaviors, and 4) practicing (and mastering) specific verbal and non-verbal communication and relational skills^{30,31}.

Helping students become culturally competent requires that we adults are aware of and have understanding and empathy for the life experiences of the young people, families, and adults we work with, as well as our own strongly held assumptions. We adults need to broaden our own knowledge base and experiences to be informed about and sensitive to students' life experiences and developmental and emotional needs—an ongoing task as schools become increasingly more diverse. As with implementing a system-wide bullying prevention approach, in order for this process to be effective, schools also need to have in place: a school philosophy, policies, and materials that demonstrate that we value cultural diversity of students, parents, and fellow faculty and staff^{32,33,34}.

Addressing differences, implementing productive dialogues, and building understanding can be daunting for even veteran teachers, and for parents and students. Whether urban, rural or suburban, most schools include pupils from around the globe. In the past thirty years, the U.S. has experienced both an increase in the non-White population and also a relative decline in the White (predominantly European) population; it has been projected that by 2050, 1 in 5 Americans will be foreign-born³⁵. The transformation in classroom demographics extends beyond racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic or

socioeconomic diversity—although these certainly present curriculum challenges that must be addressed.

Definitions of Bullying and Bias-Based Bullying

School bullying is a type of harmful aggression that affects student's physical, emotional, and academic well-being. According to a 2013 status report on bullying in US schools, approximately 20% of U.S. students in grades 3-12 are involved in bullying—of these, both boys and girls were predominantly being bullied³⁶. The repercussions of this statistic go beyond individuals and their families and school. They have an impact on the fabric of our society as well.

As of January 2014, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Education, the Health Resources and Services Administration, and input from researchers and practitioners), adopted the following uniform definition of bullying³⁷. (Note: The words emphasized in bold below are as they appear in the original CDC definition):

"[Bullying is] **unwanted aggressive behavior(s)** by another youth or group of youths who are not siblings or current dating partners...[it] involves an **observed or perceived power imbalance** and is **repeated multiple times or is highly likely to be repeated**. Bullying may inflict **harm or distress** on the targeted youth including physical, psychological, social, or educational harm."

The definition also addresses bullying through the use of technology (i.e. electronic aggression or cyber-bullying via email, chat rooms, instant message, a website, text message, or social media). In addition, it describes the roles students may play: as "the student who is bullied," "the student who bullies others," and "the student who is both bullied and who bullies others." These roles typically tend to be somewhat fluid depending on the situation. Both individuals who are bullied and those who bully others may have serious, lasting problems (e.g. health and mental health difficulties) that can adversely affect their personal or work relationships and increase their likelihood of becoming involved in risky behaviors, such as truancy or drug and alcohol abuse.

Bias-based bullying is a term used to describe bullying based on someone's actual or perceived membership in a legally protected class—i.e., based on someone's constitutionally or legally protected civil rights regarding their age, gender, race, religion, national origin, disability, or (as of July 2014) sexual orientation. This form of bullying may be considered illegal—or may lead to actions that illegally discriminate against an individual. Bias-based bullying can readily and quickly rise to the level of legal harassment, discrimination, or assault^{38,39}, so schools and educators need to familiarize themselves with the distinctions^{40,41}. Several "Dear Colleague Letters" available from the US Office for Civil Rights/Department of Education provide specific guidance for educators regarding^{42,43}; a total of six of are referenced in the *Adult Resources* section below and address additional issues regarding students' rights.

The Link Between Cultural Competence and Bullying Prevention

Dan Olweus (Norway) and others (such as Peter Smith of Great Britain) have written that their interest in bullying stems from a concern about individual human rights, and state that bullying violates those rights^{44,45}. According to Olweus⁴⁶: "It is a fundamental democratic or human right for a child to feel safe in

school and to be spared the oppression and repeated intentional humiliation implied by peer victimization.” Integral to promoting this type of school environment are the establishment of positive peer relationships, as well as creating policies, expectations and adult oversight to insure that everyone at school feels welcomed, and is treated with dignity and respect.

When human rights is the focal point, bullying prevention and cultural competence are both encouraged because attention shifts to building positive relationships (e.g. in schools, between peers, between adults, and between students and adults), rather than simply punishing negative behavior. Like bullying behavior, individuals do not grow out of bigoted behavior and prejudice—these attitudes and behaviors must be addressed with a combination of discipline and training aimed at learning alternative ways of interacting with others. Both effective bullying prevention strategies and approaches that foster cultural competence require a combination of systemic and individual approaches to succeed.

A key aspect of becoming culturally competent involves social-emotional learning that acknowledges and upholds dignity and respect for others. Individuals who are culturally competent demonstrate personal relational qualities such as genuineness, empathy and compassion, warmth, flexibility and adaptability, an ability to communicate effectively both verbally and nonverbally, and an ability to observe and actively listen. These skills are also essential to preventing behaviors such as bullying because they promote positive relationships and the establishment of caring environments. Not surprisingly, this type of social emotional learning is also essential for academic achievement^{47,48}. But to be effective, these principles must be infused systematically into school climate and modeled by adults (who themselves have achieved some level of mastery).

To reduce bullying and promote cultural competence, diversity must be an accepted ideal that is demonstrated across the entire school-wide community, imbedded into school philosophy, policies and procedures, educational practices and materials. Individual teachers must model respect and acceptance of culturally different students and in their relationships with other adults—whether each other, staff, parents, volunteers, or visitors. Adults who use positive reinforcement and model positive regard towards students promote trust, connection, and “permanent value”—and those qualities build relationships. As with bullying prevention, these all require training and practice. In addition, change does not come automatically, but is part of a process.

The Role of Literature in Promoting Cultural Competence

Our goals as educators go beyond ensuring that students are academically prepared; we also want them to be critical thinkers who act as socially responsible citizens. The following are commonly suggested by experts in the field as goals for fostering cultural competence (and apply to both adults and students)⁴⁸:

- 1) Develop awareness, knowledge and acceptance of a variety of world views.
- 2) Make others feel comfortable and welcome (not just “tolerated”).
- 3) Reflect on our own learned values and biases (or “strongly held assumptions”).
- 4) Learn about differences in cultural style, patterns of interaction, and values (applies to self and others).
- 5) Respect other ways of knowing and interacting.
- 6) Recognize one’s own strong assumptions about others (and school).
- 7) Learn about mainstream culture (also termed cultural literacy).

- 8) Develop empathy and appreciation for life experiences (and impact of those) on those who are culturally different.
- 9) Develop awareness of how life experiences of culturally different (non-mainstream) individuals reinforces power and privilege of those in the dominant/mainstream culture, and reinforces stress and mistrust of those in minority.

Literature provides a rich pathway to develop these qualities in students. Good books provide what teacher/author Stephen Wolk describes as “lightning bolts”⁴⁹ that spark inquiry, critical thinking and discussion about important issues of social responsibility (concepts that are central to developing cultural competence). While students should be encouraged to read a wide variety of genres for pleasure, literature and texts chosen for classroom teaching (including those for use as part of social competency programs and bullying prevention) should have an explicit purpose, though that does not mean they need to be didactic. Both literary and informational texts can be used to engage students about complex social issues they might otherwise lack the vocabulary or background knowledge to tackle.

In addition, students are more likely to open up when they can relate to specific characters. When literature accurately reflects students’ real-life experiences, and offers dialogue that uses voices they view as authentic, “twens” and teens are also more likely to engage in deeper discussions, and to reveal their own feelings, beliefs and strong assumptions. Literature also allows students to analyze characters’ emotions and motivations in a way that can be less threatening and anxiety-provoking than talking more directly about their own—particularly if they find them painful or embarrassing.

Annotations and themes in this bibliography provide ideas for talking points to raise questions in class, to spur conversations among groups of students, to spark further inquiry or research, or to launch focused writing assignments about topics ranging from personal ethics and social responsibility, to discrimination, privilege, rights, political sanctions, humanitarian aid, civil rights, gender bias, political protests, prisoners’ rights, slavery, etc. Teachers are encouraged to freely use excerpts from the many literature selections provided to create role plays aimed at promoting student exploration of characters’ motivations and feelings, and go beyond simply to highlighting facts or identifying solutions.

All young people, regardless of their own life situations, need guided opportunities to learn about individuals who come from different cultures, backgrounds and who have life-experiences and perspectives different from their own. While literature is not a substitute for real-life experience, the fact is that many students will have neither the prospects of meeting truly diverse groups of people in person, nor the means to experience other cultures in ways that will help them better understand complex or alternate world views. As a result, selected literature provides an important avenue for students to become informed about people from other cultures, or who have various other life-experiences and perspectives—whether they are here in our own country, or from across the globe. In the words of linguistic psychologist and US Senator S.I. Hayakawa: “It is not true that we have only one life to live; if we can read, we can live as many more lives and as many kinds of lives as we wish.”

Fostering students’ cultural competence requires going beyond literature or a curriculum that focuses on cultural “sightseeing” (e.g. culture days or “culture fairs,” sampling food, or sports, or clothing, celebrating holidays, learning a few words in another language, or having visitors talk about their homelands). All of those activities have their place in schools, yet are obviously more meaningful if they represent cultures of students within the school community. But school communities need to strive to offer more: to provide more depth, and authentic experiences that reflect aspects of daily life, religion and beliefs, pastimes, etc.

In schools and communities which lack diversity, books supply a means of introduction for students to learn about others who are different from them—one of the first steps in developing qualities such as empathy, tolerance and acceptance (and reducing bias and prejudice). For students who are members of traditionally marginalized groups, or any who face chronic adversity, literature has another important purpose: to offer examples of possibilities to which they can aspire. That means presenting more than just a view of life as they experience it now, but presenting role models and valuing futures filled with choices that take them beyond their current circumstances and literally expand their horizons.

Many authors of color and individuals representing marginalized groups have spoken and written about their own personal experiences overcoming adversity, and about the difficulties they had finding literature that depicted positive role models or a variety of possible life-paths for them, a gap that has been referred to as “the apartheid of children’s literature”⁵⁰. This is something that children and adults who are a part of our country’s mainstream culture typically take for granted because they are surrounded by role models, options, and possibilities. Literacy advocates such as the late Walter Dean Myers emphasize the urgent need to create “roadmaps” for students that reveal achievable futures to which they can strive⁵¹.

Many experts in the field of multicultural education emphasize the value of providing books written and illustrated by authors who have lived the experiences they write about, and who show that students outside of the mainstream need not be defined by their current circumstances, that they have choices, and that success is possible. Make an ongoing commitment to include more literature written by individuals with authentic perspectives about the lives, social issues, families and communities of cultures around the globe. Learn more about the authors and illustrators of books you use in your classroom, and incorporate that information into your discussions with students as a way to inform and inspire them.

With any culture-specific materials, be sure to evaluate them for accuracy and authenticity; look for examples of ways they challenge stereotypes; and select examples that provide positive life-choices made by people from minority or marginalized groups. This is particularly important if your school lacks diversity and/or students do not have opportunities to have positive interactions with people who are culturally or racially different from themselves. Include supplemental materials and information cultures within your own school community, as well as nationally, and from around the world. In addition, use technology to expand students’ exposure and connection to broader realities: e.g. use audio-visual materials that challenge student’s viewpoints; use “virtual classrooms” to introduce new places, people, religions or lifestyles; use Skype to connect with pen pals or classrooms in “sister” schools around the world. Examples are listed in the *Adult Resources and References* section of this bibliography.

As adults, our own cultural competence is also continually evolving, based on our own knowledge and experiences. It is only natural that our own training and awareness about some of these issues and topics to be limited. Those of us who are part of the mainstream culture may be unaware of what we don’t know, and may shy away from discussions about potentially hot topics, or hesitate to ask questions to get more information. Clearly, the more familiar we are, the more open and comfortable we will feel broaching potentially “touchy” subjects in a way that allows students to share their own ideas, attitudes, biases, and beliefs in a safe and controlled setting. To help facilitate that, this new bibliography includes more detailed annotations than its predecessor—annotations include more extensive plot and character descriptions, as well as background information, curriculum and other literature selections, links to websites and other resource materials, and (in some cases) teacher guides and links to Common Core State Standards. All this is intended to deepen discussions about the complex and sometimes sensitive topics with students and to help teachers create links to academic content.

Tips for Using this Bibliography

“Reading is important, because if you can read,
you can learn anything about everything and everything about anything.”

Tomie dePaola (Author, Illustrator)

Overview and Caveats

New materials on topics related to bullying prevention inundate schools, teachers, parents and students with a seemingly never-ending supply of “expert” advice. A similar pattern exists with materials geared towards cultural competency, though, as noted above, the numbers of books at all grade levels (particularly by and about people of color) are limited. This new volume is meant to be a “companion” to the original [Olweus Bullying Prevention Program \(OBPP\) Companion Bibliography](#)⁵², published in 2009. This current edition also addresses bullying, but from a broader human rights/social justice perspective, and includes literature focused on complex social issues and themes related to cultural competence. It is intended to be used by classroom teachers and school staff to open dialogues with students about a range of themes, creating positive school climates where all students feel welcome. It is expected that the literature and resources provided will be used in connection to academic themes.

This new volume includes over 200 listings of student literature (many recently published items). In addition, quite a few can be used across multiple grade-level groupings—notations about those appear in each applicable section. This new bibliography also includes various curriculum resource and support materials (including audio visuals and games), faculty references, periodicals, and websites (some of which may also be suitable for student use). This is not a comprehensive listing of all materials about bullying or cultural competence themes and, as noted previously, it includes topics and themes not traditionally included in cultural competency curricula (i.e., it goes beyond race and ethnicity).

All entries in this bibliography have been reviewed by this author to assess their compatibility with accepted best practices in bullying prevention and current thinking in the field of cultural competence. A primary goal in making selections for this edition was to feature books written (and illustrated) by people of color, and by individuals whose first-hand life experiences informed the topics they write about. While the entries in this bibliography represent the highest quality of materials available, they are drawn from a pool of items of that vary widely in terms of quality and the messages they convey. Every effort has been made to select books that 1) have the broadest teaching value, 2) do not reinforce harmful misconceptions and stereotypes, and 3) are developmentally appropriate. Keep in mind that it is virtually impossible to find any selections (let alone a variety of materials) that are “perfect.” Extensive annotation notes are meant to provide not just a summary of each book, but information about its potential use with students.

As you select from books provided here, keep in mind that ***there is no substitute for first reading the materials yourself to determine which may or may not be appropriate for your students, staff, or families.*** Use the notes provided in the annotations to identify some of the shortcomings of a particular selection and to use those “flaws” as jumping-off points to guide student discussions about viewpoints the author presents and issues they raise—this level of discussion encourages students to become critical thinkers. Many of the annotations also provide background and contextual information that can be used to promote student understanding about the often complicated issues of culture, race, human rights, and social justice issues presented. Information is also provided to help adults become more familiar with the topics and viewpoints presented, along with tips about how to address or interpret them. Because standards about acceptable content and themes vary from school to school, all listings were screened for potentially “sensitive” language and subject matter, and caveats are included in the annotations. Recent books for older teens in particular contain authentic dialogues (often with graphic or explicit language and content), profanity and some adult themes that you may feel are not appropriate for use with your students.

Tips for Using this Bibliography

"To learn to read is to light a fire; every syllable that is spelled out is a spark."

Victor Hugo (Author, from Les Misérables)

Using the Student Literature Entries

Ideally, materials used to promote cultural competence should 1) be written by people whose first-hand life experiences informed the topics and characters; 2) convey positive and accurate messages about traditionally marginalized people (i.e., that don't reinforce stereotypes or bias, or that offer inaccurate information); 3) offer material and characters students can relate to (even if it focuses on a historical time period or event) and 4) (particularly for marginalized students) open possibilities about who they can become and how their lives can be, rather than simply reflecting their current experiences.

In this bibliography, student literature is grouped into four separate sections: Grades K-2, Grades 3-5, Grades 6-8, and Grade 9-12. Entries in each section generally meet the reading level for those grades, though some will offer a challenge for older or gifted students (or can be read aloud); some suggestions for struggling and reluctant readers are also included. As previously noted, some may be appropriate for students at more than one level. Choose books based on your student's interests and abilities; don't limit yourself to books just at the grade-level you teach. Selections for Grades K-2 are primarily picture books, with some "beginning readers" or primers. Those for Grades 3-5 include picture books with slightly more sophisticated themes, easy readers and chapter books appropriate for most students at this level. Grade 6-8 selections are primarily chapter books, with some graphic novels, picture books with more mature themes, poems, short stories, and easy readers; many were selected from middle-school reading lists. Books for Grades 9-12 include a wide range of titles and types of literature; including many commonly recommended in high-school syllabi and Common Core State Standards: poetry, screen plays and shooting scripts, short stories, biographies and memoirs, young adult books and others with themes and topics that interest older teens, as well as some options for both advanced and reluctant readers.

Some of the student literature included in this bibliography is available in languages other than English (primarily Spanish). Notations are made to indicate known available translations, but where it was not possible to assess the quality of translated texts, that is noted. Many are also available in multiple formats (including electronic and audio versions) that can be variously employed in the classroom. .

Entries for student literature and resources are organized in the following way:

- Within each grade-level section (marked by a header), books are listed alphabetically by title.
- Author, illustrator (as appropriate) and publication information are provided for each entry. Please be aware that children's literature is frequently republished by different companies—so don't worry if you are unable to find the particular edition listed here. Most listings are available in multiple formats, including e-books and audio versions. In some cases (with picture books in particular) older hardbound or "library editions" provide superior illustrations for use with larger groups of children.
- Annotations describe the general plot, character information and other content; point out potential flaws or pitfalls that need to be addressed; offer background information that might help facilitate classroom discussion, as well as potential curriculum connections, web links, resource materials, and (in some cases) teacher guides and information about Common Core State Standard to help teachers make connections to academic content.
- Relevant bullying prevention and cultural competency themes are listed beneath each annotation. Most books can be used to support multiple concepts and themes.

Tips for Using this Bibliography

"Books ...have whole worlds inside of them."

Neil Gaiman (Graphic Novelist)

How to Use Themes

Student literature in this edition was examined for content that addressed some basic underlying themes related to both bullying prevention and cultural competence. Linking these themes to academic curriculum content and activities will reinforce student learning. Student literature selections meet Common Core State Standards in English/Language Arts, Writing, and Mathematics, as well as standards for Health Education; there are also a variety of links that can be made to Music, technology, and the Arts (fine arts and performing arts).

The following fifteen broad topic headings, listed alphabetically below, are used throughout this bibliography. Relevant themes are listed following the annotation for each piece of student literature; readers will note all student literature addresses more than one topic, and that there is some overlap between them. In addition, following each theme are examples of specific content ideas (in parentheses). Topics marked with an asterisk (*) are also listed in the original 2009 edition (though some new content examples have been added here). Within each annotation, questions and specific content connections are provided to give teachers background and ideas for how to present materials related to particular themes.

- **Biases and Stereotypes*** (identity, social norms, stereotypes, prejudice, bias, attitudes, injustice intolerance, hate, power and privilege, racism, marginalization, protected classes, civil rights, apartheid, ageism, cultural bias, preferential treatment/entitlement, self-reflection, able-ism)
- **Bullying Issues*** (types of bullying, hotspots, impact of bullying, responding to incidents, roles of adults and bystanders, understanding motivation for bullying, cyber bullying, bias-based bullying)
- **Communication*** (promoting active listening; communicating clearly in words or writing; recognizing nonverbal and social cues, body language, tone of voice, being assertive, self-expression, social media, communication through art and music, use of symbols, social problem-solving)
- **Feelings*** (identifying, recognizing, and expressing feelings; understanding and managing strong emotions; courage, empathy, compassion, self-confidence/esteem, self-respect, body image, self-expression, depression, suicidal ideation/suicide, self-reflection)
- **Gender Issues*** (defining gender, gender norms and stereotypes, sexual harassment, homophobia, gender equity, gender violence, relational aggression, gender non-conforming, LGBTQ)
- **Global Citizenship** (knowledge of global political & social issues; cultural awareness, awareness of other religious and spiritual systems, diplomacy, environmental stewardship)
- **Human Rights** (human rights definition, social justice, equality, violations and abuses, slavery, human trafficking, Rights of the Child)
- **Justice/Injustice** (equity/inequity, fairness, incarceration, penalize, code of honor, snitching, amnesty, restorative practices, women's rights, suffrage, apartheid, oppression)

Tips for Using this Bibliography

- **Peer Relationships*** (friendship, popularity, individuality, peer pressure, barriers versus healthy boundaries, being an ally, active bystanders, respect, loyalty, making amends, awareness of other's needs, cliques, gangs, sports teams, romantic relationships, healthy versus toxic relationships, partner abuse, group identity, conformity/individuality)
- **Respecting Differences*** (tolerance, acceptance, welcoming others, culture, respect, freedom, civil and human rights, dignity, perspective-taking, honor/honorable, diversity, ethnicity, heritage, points-of-view, individual identity)
- **Serving the Community*** (community outreach, altruism, charitable work, volunteerism, environmental stewardship)
- **Social Responsibility & Activism** (national and global citizenship, ethics, democracy, civil disobedience, social welfare, protest, peace-building, whistle-blowing)
- **Social Systems** (traditional, alternative and changing family structures, community, culture, traditions, cultural norms, taboos)
- **Team-Building*** (building a positive class climate, promoting group cohesiveness, empathy kindness, cooperation, working together, collaboration, adaptability, compromise, group identity, teamwork)
- **Violence** (child abuse, peer abuse, domestic abuse/partner violence, violence against women, rape/sexual violence, gang violence, crime, genocide, war)

Where Can Teachers Obtain the Resources Listed in this Bibliography?

The vast majority of student literature listed here should be available on school or public library shelves and as loans through inter-library networks. Sources such as Amazon.com often carry titles in multiple formats (including e-books and audio-versions), offering less expensive options for schools. Books can also be used creatively as part of shared reading or “book-group” style learning experiences. In addition, more books are available to be purchased in audio formats or electronically and used on smart boards and other technology to make them available to more students at a fraction of the cost of purchasing classroom sets of individual texts. With picture books, larger format “library editions” are recommended whenever possible, because the larger illustrations and font sizes make them more accessible to use with larger groups of children; while they may be listed as “out of print”, many are still available in libraries.

From a literacy perspective, there are clearly advantages to students having actual hard-copy books to use and manipulate, but there are a growing number of resources to help teachers make the best use of technology as a classroom teaching tool⁵³ as well as sites that offer digital access to children's books (some for free).

Here are several to try:

Scholastic Kids: <http://www.scholastic.com/kids/stacks>

Story Place: The Children's Digital Library: www.storyplace.org

Starfall: Where Children Have Fun Learning to Read: <http://www.starfall.com>

Tips for Using this Bibliography

"Today a reader, tomorrow a leader."
Margaret Fuller (Women's Rights Advocate)

Using Adult Resources and References

Over 100 teacher resources were specifically selected to support classroom implementation of the themes of cultural competence and human rights. Adult resources are divided into five sections: *Curriculum Support Materials* (including audio visuals and materials designed to be used directly by/with students), a listing of *Feature Films*, *General Resource and Reference Materials* (including books and research articles), *Periodicals* and *Websites* (including some that offer curriculum support materials as well as adult-reference materials). Materials within each section are organized following a format similar to that used in the *Student Literature* sections:

- Books and articles are listed alphabetically by Title, followed by author, publisher/date; Periodicals are listed alphabetically by name and include web links; and Websites are listed alphabetically by name followed by the URL.
- Annotation: A synopsis of the resource includes any caveats and how it might be used with students or by adults.
- Rather than themes, each material is designated by type of material and audience. This information is listed below each annotation and includes one or more of the following:
 - **Curriculum Resource** (activities for use with student; appropriate grade level is indicated as possible)
 - **Teacher Guide** (often accompanying an Audio Visual or similar material)
 - **Teaching Resource** (general information or text; some are also listed as appropriate for Counseling Staff and Parents)
 - **Staff Development Material** (appropriate for use in staff discussion or study groups, PLCs or staff training)
 - **Teacher Reference** (informative text or research paper)

A few periodicals are included, along with their website links to subscribe. Most are free to educators, or available at low cost; some are available in online versions. These are intended primarily as teacher reference and as resources for background information on particular topics or themes presented in this bibliography. Some offer curriculum resources, and a few might be appropriate for students at the secondary levels to access directly.

Over twenty five websites (in addition to web-links imbedded throughout the annotations) are listed. The range of websites includes some that are appropriate for student use, others provide free curriculum materials, and others serve as information clearinghouses or are government-sponsored websites. Most are well-respected and considered stable. While due diligence was used in screening and selecting these sites, it was not possible to follow and evaluate every link within each. In addition, even some excellent sites change over time or occasionally list some inadequate or inappropriate materials. Be sure to exercise your right as good consumers and investigate before you use any resource, to determine its appropriateness for your school and student population.

Tips for Using this Bibliography

"A book is like a garden, carried in the pocket."

Chinese Proverb

How to Use the Special Issues Charts

There were certain topics that consistently came up in reviewing student literature for this document. These are related to cultural competence and the specific themes outlined above, but in many cases highlighted particular social problems, additional concerns, or needs raised by schools. To capture these topics, and to provide a quick reference for teachers looking for a book or books to address a particular subject matter, student literature from both this bibliography and the 2009 volume were reviewed and then (as applicable) sorted into seventeen "Special Issues."

Each issue appears alphabetically in a separate chart (along with bulleted qualifiers/subtopics), and is provided in a separate section immediately following the four *Student Literature* sections. Within each chart, student literature titles are listed alphabetically clustered according to the four grade-level groupings; a notation beside each title indicates both the grade level and its location in either this edition, or the 2009 volume—identified as (Vol 1). It is strongly recommended that when teachers locate a title in the chart, they refer to the full annotation to determine if the book is likely to meet their needs.

Not all books in the bibliographies fell into one of these special issues categories, and others are listed in multiple charts. Certain topics seemed to be consistently linked (e.g. *Addiction/Mental Illness* with *Homelessness* and *Poverty*; or *Poverty, Racism, and Violence*) and titles are listed accordingly. Books listed do not inherently have a negative perspective on the issue, but some of the issues address problems that are associated with graphic content or strong language (which makes reading the complete annotations essential to screening books for your students). Several categories (including *Disabilities, Diverse/Non-Traditional Families, Inspirational Biographies/Memoirs*) include many positive examples and role models. Books available in more than one language are marked with an asterisk (*) and appear in the *Multicultural Perspectives* chart.

The following lists the Special issues as they appear in alphabetical order.

- **Addiction/Mental Illness**
- **Bias-Based Bullying**
- **Child Abuse/Neglect**
- **Disabilities**
- **Diverse/Non-Traditional Families**
- **Gender Issues**
- **Gender Violence**
- **Homelessness**
- **Human Rights/Human Right Violations**
- **Immigration**
- **Incarceration**
- **Inspirational Biographies/Memoirs**
- **Multicultural Perspectives (Including Bilingual Literature)**
- **Poverty**
- **Racism**
- **Suicide**
- **Violence/War**

Choosing Student Literature

“Any book that helps a child to form a habit of reading, to make reading one of his needs, is good for him.”

Maya Angelou (Poet, Civil Right Activist, Renaissance Woman)

Guidelines for Choosing Student Literature About Bullying and Cultural Competence

Selections in this bibliography were reviewed with somewhat overlapping sets of criteria to assess their general teaching value, appropriateness, student appeal and whether they reflected best practices and principles in both bullying prevention and multicultural education. Since your school may not have access to all the resources listed here, it is essential to be an informed consumer and follow similar guidelines (listed below) to choose materials that send the “right” message about “hot-button” topics like bullying, culture, race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. These same questions can be adapted for use with students, to stimulate discussions and develop their critical thinking skills about these important issues.

General (apply to all resources selected for teaching)

1. Is it developmentally appropriate for my students?
2. Does it have teaching value in more than one area/topic?
3. Does it link to other topics and themes I want to teach? Does it support academic content/core curriculum standards that I teach?
4. Is it something I can use over time, with other groups of students?
5. Is it appealing (for my students)? (What is appealing about it?)
6. Does it offer variety from the materials I currently use (in terms of content and format)?
7. Are the flaws usable as teaching material and generating discussion?
8. Does it contain potentially objectionable material and how will I respond to that if challenged? What are the “redeeming qualities” for using this resource in spite of potential shortcomings or issues?
9. Can I readily identify its purpose and various ways I might use this resource?
10. Does it add to my own knowledge base?
11. Is it didactic or does it allow students to explore ideas and encourage them to articulate their own ideas and points of view?

Bullying (support general principals and research regarding best practices in the field; these are discussed in greater detail in the 2009 [Companion Bibliography](#) on pages 2-3)⁵⁴

1. Does it convey an accurate understanding of bullying?
2. Does it depict a single or stereotyped view of bullying behavior or a range of student roles and behavior?
3. Does it reflect best practices in responding to bullying (i.e., does not use conflict resolution strategies; does not encourage in-kind responses, shows proactive adults who model appropriate behavior for students)?
4. Does it provide opportunities to discuss a range of bullying prevention themes, versus just one aspect of bullying?
5. Does it promote prosocial behavior and show active bystanders in a positive way (even if they are unsuccessful in stopping or preventing bullying)?
6. Does it reinforce active effective intervention by adults?
7. Does it portray realistic and age-appropriate ways to respond to bullying, including resolutions or outcomes that are aligned with best practices?
8. Is it realistic in terms of language, situations and solutions portrayed?

Choosing Student Literature

9. Does it avoid stereotypes about gender or other biases related to gender (including appearance)? Does it depict both boys and girls with strong personalities, who are not gender-role bound?
10. Can this resource be used to help students understand the motivation and feelings associated with the different roles in bullying (i.e. using the Bullying Circle as a guide)?
11. Is the language inclusive?
12. Does it promote stereotypes or misconceptions about bullying behavior, motivation, or appropriate problem-solving strategies?
13. Does it oversimplify complex situations?
14. Does it promote empathy and compassion for others?
15. If the materials are translated into or from another language, does it offer accurate definition and depiction of bullying (as defined by above)?

Cultural Competence (support best practices regarding multicultural teaching principles⁵⁵, and reflects the broader definition as stated above in *Introduction: What Is Cultural Competence?*)

1. Is it realistic and authentic in terms of characters, language, and situations portrayed?
2. Do the language and images together send accurate messages about the chosen theme, or do they reinforce stereotypes and misconceptions? Does the use of authentic language help to elevate understanding of and appreciation for of a particular dialect, or does it reinforce negative stereotypes about certain ways of speaking or communicating?
3. Are there characters of color and how are they portrayed? Do they represent the range of multi-ethnicities within a classroom, school, and community like the one I teach in? OR (in culturally homogenous schools) Does it reflect a point of view and experience that helps my students broaden their horizons and understanding of the life experiences of others different from their own? Does it provide a positive vision of the future for my students who are traditionally marginalized?
4. Are the main characters and dialogue authentic to the period? Are the solutions accurate for the period?
5. Does the resource depict both boys and girls with strong personalities, who are not gender-role bound?
6. Taken as a whole, does this add to the range of classroom materials I use to reflect a wide range of identities, cultures, races, gender/gender identity, socioeconomic class, immigration status, family structure, and nationalities?
7. Is the language inclusive? (e.g. Does it reflect a welcoming point of view or simply tolerance? Does it reinforce an “us” and “them” viewpoint?)
8. Does it promote stereotypes?
9. Does it oversimplify complex situations?
10. How does it help my students connect to individuals life-experiences and points of view different from their own (and my own)?
11. Does it dishonor the heritage or life experiences of any student, their family or family of origin, or culture in any way?
12. If the materials are translated into or from another language, is the language accurate and do the words and images convey the culture without stereotyping?
13. Can these materials be used to encourage positive constructive conversations between students who are part of dominant and minority cultural groups?

Selecting Resources for English Language Learners

With students whose first language is not English, be sure to choose books that provide high-quality accurate translations—not just literal ones that lose the cadence, flow or gist of the story. Translations of selected student literature selections were included and evaluated as much as possible for this resource, but it was not possible to evaluate all. Be sure to identify adults who can help you to assess the appropriateness of these and other translations you find.

In terms of bullying issues, be aware that the term bullying has different meanings in different cultures—and that not all languages have an equivalent translation that conveys the scope of both direct and indirect types of bullying. It is therefore preferable to describe specific bullying behaviors or situations (e.g., name-calling, exclusion, threatening, gossiping, taking possessions), and (as in English) to use the terminology “the student who was bullied” and “the student who bullied others” rather than labels such as “bully” or “victim”. Use opportunities to discuss with parents and students the way that culture affects attitudes about and responses and approaches to bullying behavior.

While not part of the scope of this bibliography, it seems important to note here the importance of finding ways to talking with culturally-different students and their families about issues related to cultural competence (like race, culture, ethnicity, values or traditions). These conversations may feel awkward, but opening the door to dialogues such as these (even when they are difficult) is preferable to making assumptions, or feeling paralyzed about how to begin. Clearly, it is best to find a fully bilingual interpreter to help facilitate these conversations. That person might be a school employee, a parent liaison, an adult family member or friend, or a community volunteer (e.g., from a community health, EOC, fraternal or business organization, a church or faith-based group, or an agency that serves immigrant populations)—experts recommended asking an adult, rather than relying on students, to act in that interpretive role, to avoid the potential for miscommunications or disempowering the parent. Try to learn as much as possible about a family’s home culture and language ahead of time, but don’t be embarrassed to respectfully ask questions that show you are truly interested in learning *and* listening. In addition, be sure to provide information for parents that educate them about US school systems, including information about their rights, expectations and responsibilities, contact information and resources.

Selecting Resources for Students with Profound Physical, Mental or Emotional Challenges

While beyond the scope of this bibliography, it is important to note that students who are deaf or hard of hearing, blind or partially sighted, and those who have other physical, cognitive or emotional challenges (both visible and “invisible”) tend to be more likely to be bullied and are often marginalized by their peers (and society as a whole).

When choosing books specifically for these students, teachers may find it helpful to focus on ways that individual students learn or communicate best, rather than focus on their learning difficulties. For example, deaf children rely heavily on visual cues to learn about their environment—so books with strong visual content and illustrations, or methods that pair written words with sign language, can be beneficial; students with visual impairments will be more likely to rely on auditory or tactile cues to communicate, so using books on tape or techniques that utilize tactile or kinesthetic (movement) cues can reinforce student engagement

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and concept development. In other cases, particular content may capture a student's attention and provide an entrée into their world (e.g. autistic students may gravitate towards music or animals, for example).

A bigger challenge can be helping peers to better understand and empathize with the experiences of their differently-abled classmates and to view them as whole people who don't need to be "fixed." There are books within each grade section of *Student Literature* that address experiences of people living with various physical and mental challenges and which can promote dialogue among students about various topics.

"Once you learn to read, you will be forever free."
Frederick Douglass (Freed Slave, Abolitionist)

There is not always agreement among people about the precise meaning or even choice of words used to describe some of the concepts addressed in this bibliography. Students and adults alike will benefit from having a common vocabulary for classroom discussion purposes, for faculty discussions and training, and in conversations with parents. While it might be tempting to use dictionary definitions, students will benefit from having terms explained in developmentally appropriate ways that go beyond a definition, and to provide a context for understanding underlying concepts and issues; the following glossary attempts to do that in child-friendly terms. All students will profit from having a conceptual framework for understanding the bigger issues and concepts. Younger students may need to have more complex ideas broken down into even smaller "chunks" or information paired with both developmentally appropriate language and concrete examples that illustrate the ideas (or issues) conveyed by each word. The following is not a comprehensive list, and should be used as guide. Vocabulary is listed alphabetically.

Bias: A form of prejudice that views a particular person or group of people in a way considered to be unfair. Bias is *learned* behavior. When we are biased, we compare people in a way considers one person, group, or point of view to be better than another, often on the basis of superficial qualities such as their appearance. When a biased point of view is held by a larger group of people, it tends to become accepted as normal, and that typically leads to unfair and unequal treatment (e.g. in school, at work, by communities, institutions, or nations).

Bigotry: Intolerance of a person or group you perceive as different from you (this can relate to their appearance or the color of their skin, the ways they dress or speak, their religious beliefs, their abilities, sexual orientation, social class, cultural practices, or other beliefs). Bigotry is a *learned* behavior that involves prejudice and/or discrimination based on stereotypes. It is based on a belief that one group of people is better, and others are viewed as "less than." Bigotry can be demonstrated as hate, exclusion/shunning, segregation, racial or ethnic slurs, and acts of violence.

Biracial: Literally, this refers to being of two races; some individuals use this term to describe their own mixed racial and ethnic heritage. This is a term used in several literature selections to describe characters/children whose parents are racially different from one another, and often to describe challenges they sometimes face as a result of that mixed heritage. Biracial children may look more like one parent than the other, or have features or skin tone that is a combination of both. Their outward appearances can affect how other people perceive and treat them, as well as how they form their own identities; many experience inaccurate assumptions, discrimination and exclusion, and confusion about where they fit in. Some books describe characters whose racial identity is ambiguous enough that they are able to "pass" as one race or the other (usually referring to people "passing" as White). Some people prefer to use the term **multiracial** to describe their mixed racial heritage, but that word is also used to describe groups made up of people from several different races. The year 2000, in response to changing demographics, was the first time the US Census gave people the option of identifying themselves as belonging to more than one race.

Bullying (and Bias-Based Bullying): Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior that involves a real or perceived power imbalance (distinguishing it from conflicts that arise among equals)⁵⁶. To be considered bullying, the behavior must also be repeated, or have the potential to be repeated, over time. Bullying includes: verbal "put downs," making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally, excluding someone from a group on purpose, and includes the use of technology to engage in these behaviors (cyber-bullying). **Bias-based bullying** refers to bullying that is founded on someone's

constitutionally or legally protected civil rights (e.g., it is based on their age, gender, race, religion, national origin, disability, or sexual orientation). This form of bullying may be considered illegal—or may lead to actions that illegally discriminate against an individual. Both individuals who are bullied and those who bully others may have serious, lasting problems (e.g. health and mental health difficulties that can adversely affect their personal or work relationships and increase their likelihood of becoming involved in risky behaviors, such as truancy, drug and alcohol abuse, or even criminal behavior). People who bully do not grow out bullying; they require support from adults at home and school to learn ways of change their behaviors. Schools play an important role in stopping bullying by implementing comprehensive measures designed to improve peer relationships, effective adult intervention, and to create school climate where bullying is not accepted and where everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

Civil Rights/Civil Rights Movement: The largest social movement of the 20th century peaked in the 1950's and 1960's was organized and led by Black men and women, along with Whites, to fight racial inequality in education, economic opportunity, and the political and legal processes. Centered in the American South, where the state and local governments had passed segregation laws, known as Jim Crow laws, that mandated restrictions on voting qualifications and left the Black population economically and politically powerless, the actions focused primarily on three areas of discrimination: education, social segregation, and voting rights. Action occurred at both the national and local levels and included legal means, negotiations, petitions, acts of civil disobedience and nonviolent protest, and demonstrations. Several key and charismatic leaders emerged during this time, including both Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcom X (whose views about Black independence and methods contrasted sharply)—while King espoused solidarity with Whites and nonviolent actions, Malcom X believed that Black Americans should fight for their own independence separate from Whites and use violence if necessary.

Culture: In the simplest terms, culture describes a way of life or “the way we do things (here).” It is a *learned* pattern of behavior by a group of people who generally live together as a community and whose daily lives have many things in common with each other (e.g., ancestry, language, customs, religious practices, art and music, food or way of preparing it, holiday celebrations, or special types of clothing or ways of dressing). When we are with people who share our same culture, we tend to feel comfortable and welcomed; we feel we “belong” and can “be ourselves” without having to explain the way we do things. It is important to let children know that people from the same cultures are not all the same, but they often share similar ideas and ways of doing things that bind them together as a community. When people move to a place that has a different culture, it often takes them time to learn a new language, customs or ways of relating to others, and that affects whether they feel they fit in with their new community. Often the more different their home culture, the longer it may take them to fit in (assimilate). When we learn about the lives and views of people from around the world, we can find things we have in common, and help them feel accepted in our culture. **Culture conflict** refers to a *learned* pattern of behavior that can be used in two different ways. The first describes the way people entering a different culture can feel about the struggle to balance learning ways to fit into the new culture and still retain and enjoy the language, customs, and practices of their home culture. The second refers to conflicts between people from different cultures and their strongly different ideas or customs lead to the belief that one way of doing thing is better or correct. That leads to disagreements that can lead to exclusion, discrimination, violence, and even war. Learning about things we have in common and appreciating ways that we are different can help us have a better understanding and appreciation for the way other people do things. That can help us make others feel more welcome, and live together more peacefully.

Cultural Competence: The ability to successfully get along with and work together with others whose life and/or social experiences are different from your own. Developing cultural competence is a *learned* process involving mastery of specific abilities and skills that results in an ability to understand,

communicate with, and effectively interact with people regardless of their cultural, life, or social experiences, and applies to members of the dominant and minority cultures. This very broad definition is used throughout this bibliography and includes being able to get along with individuals who are culturally or racially different from ourselves, as well as others who have been historically excluded, marginalized, or treated unfairly (e.g. women, poor people, people with disabilities, religious minorities, and those whose sexual-orientation is not heterosexual). It is a term most often used to describe educational practice and workplace performance. Diversity training experts describe four distinct aspects of cultural competence⁵⁷: 1) awareness of one's own cultural worldview, 2) attitudes towards cultural differences, 3) knowledge about different cultural practices and worldviews, and (d) cross-cultural skills.

Customs: Traditions or anything that a group of people does together, and have done the same way for a long time. Customs are most often practiced by people living in the same community, country, culture, era, or who practice the same religion. The term customs generally refers to actions or practices.

Class/Social Class: Refers to a group of people with similar levels of wealth, influence, and social status. This term is used to describe ways that a society is stratified in terms of their standards of living, job-status or sources of income, or access to basic needs and services (such as adequate nutrition and access to clean water or services such as education, healthcare, and adequate housing). Ideas about class are often determined subjectively, reinforced by those at the highest social or economic status, and influenced by politics. The term can have pejorative connotations and be used to justify the inequality in power and privilege between groups. (Note: in some instances, this bibliography uses the term **protected class(es)** to refer to US Civil Rights Legislation which describes particular groups of people considered more vulnerable to marginalization and discrimination)^{58,59,60}.

Discrimination: Actions that exclude people or treat them unfairly. Discrimination is *learned* and begins with stereotypes and prejudices that become more entrenched as students reach secondary school. Discriminatory behaviors in the early grades, such as comments like “No girls allowed!” or “You can’t play with us, you walk funny.” can usually addressed directly as a teachable moment. But as students age, behaviors that start as seemingly harmless slights and exclusion can escalate to illegal forms of discrimination that require more formal action (e.g. harassing someone perceived as gay; forming cliques or clubs that exclude students because of their race or ethnicity, using ethnic slurs to refer to a particular group of students, or denying someone the opportunity to play on a sports team because of their gender or a disability). Diversity experts also point to more subtle discriminatory practices, such as systematically ignoring the contributions of individuals who are a protected minority or culturally different, or how lack of awareness of our own prejudices is inadvertently communicated to others⁶¹. If treated improperly or reinforced by school policies, these can lead to legal liability issues with high-stakes consequences. Reinforcing concepts such as equity and reciprocity (we treat each other in ways we want to be treated) can help counteract discrimination. The Department of Justice’s Community Relations Service is a “peacemaker” and free resource available to help schools to resolve community conflicts and tensions related to civil rights discrimination.

Diversity: Different and varied (groups of people). As used in the context of multicultural education in the US, this term refers to the fact that our country is made up of people of many different races, nationalities, and cultures. When an individual school’s or school district’s population does not reflect that larger context of diversity, or a school faculty does not reflect the racial or ethnic composition of the community, or when students’ relationships are divided along racial, ethnic or economic lines, it is important to openly acknowledge those challenges and to directly address underlying stereotypes, biases, and discrimination.

Dominant Culture: This term is used throughout this bibliography and refers to the established language, religion, values, rituals, and social customs in a society and often become the accepted norm for the society as a whole⁶². The dominant culture is usually, but not always, in the majority (an important consideration as the cultural demographics of our country continues to shift in the coming decades). In the US, the dominant culture (also referred to as the mainstream culture) is generally viewed as English-speaking, of European ancestry, middle-class, heterosexual, Protestant/Christian, able-bodied and male. While a truly multicultural society celebrates and respects all cultures equally, the dominant culture achieves and maintains power by controlling social institutions such as communication, educational institutions, artistic expression, law, political process, and business. Those who are not part of that dominant culture (e.g. Native Americans, Black or Asian Americans, Latinos; poor people; Jews or Muslims; disabled individuals or deaf people; LGBT people; and women, for example) are **marginalized** to various degrees and must choose to oppose (or be opposed by), assimilate, exist alongside, or react to the dominant culture. The notion of “**White privilege**”⁶³ is one aspect of the ways that the influence of the dominant culture affects us (see below for more detailed explanation).

Ethnic Group: A group of people who share a common culture (including language, ancestry, diet, customs, religion and physical features traditionally associated with race). Members identify with the group and identify other members as part of their group and see themselves as separate or distinct from different from other ethnic groups. The term **ethnic minority group** is used to describe an ethnic group that is different from the dominant racial or ethnic group; and in some cases may be used to describe members of a non-White population. The observable differences in group members’ outward appearance, language, habits or religion can become the basis for discrimination or unequal treatment.

Equality/Equity/Fairness: Though these terms are often used interchangeably, the differences in their meanings, and how they are put into practice, result in very different outcomes. Even young children can learn to distinguish between the concepts by using concrete examples (e.g. giving each a different-sized snack or mismatched pair of shoes). **Equality** means we are all provided with the same rights, and receive the same treatment (we are all treated the same way and given the same tools). **Equity** acknowledges that we do not start from the same point, requires trying to understand what individuals need to succeed, then giving each person the appropriate tools (we are not on a level playing field, so we each get what we need). Though both aim to promote justice and fairness, equality is only fair if everyone starts from the same place and needs the same thing. Equity and fairness can be used synonymously. Equity is at the heart of Affirmative Action, Special Education Reform, and the Equal Rights Amendment.

Gender: Attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that a given culture associates with a person’s biological sex. (Sex is a biological construct which is determined by genetic makeup and anatomical features which occur on a surprisingly varied spectrum, though generally medically assigned as either male or female; anatomical ambiguity is currently referred to as intersex)⁶⁴. Gender is a *learned* social construct, rather than a biological one; the way a person acts, dresses, communicates and express their interests reflect social and cultural expectations about gender. From the moment we are born, we are bombarded by gender expectations and messages—family upbringing, culture, peers, community, media images, and religious views all help shape our understanding of this core aspect of our personal identity. How a child learns and internalizes those messages influences how they view themselves and others, and interact with world around them. The result of all this input is the formation of (often rigid) ideas about what it means to act like a boy or girl (known as **gender-role stereotypes**). Like all stereotypes, these have a damaging effect on the healthy development both boys and girls, particularly boys are forced to reinforce their sense of masculinity by rejecting and devaluing traits perceived as feminine (e.g. crying or showing emotions beyond anger, taking an interest in dance or fashion, playing with dolls). Behavior that reflects cultural

expectations for gender roles is referred to as gender-normative; behaviors that are viewed as incompatible with these expectations is referred to as **gender non-conforming**.

Gender Identity: An individual's basic sense of self as being male, female, or transgender⁶⁵. Gender identity is not inherently connected to anatomy—it is how we perceive ourselves on a biological spectrum. When a person's gender identity and biological sex do not match, the individual may identify themselves as transgender or transsexual. We all have a gender identity—and consider that a basic fact about who we are and how we function in our world; children as young as preschool are able to tell someone whether they are a boy or girl, and (if their gender identity is incongruent with their biological assignment), to articulate whether or not they feel comfortable in their own skin. Gender identity is separate from **sexual orientation**.

Harassment: Unwelcome behavior that is bad enough or happens often enough to make someone feel uncomfortable, scared or confused, and that interferes with a student's schoolwork, ability attend class, or participate in extracurricular activities. These *learned* behaviors create a hostile learning environment that affects all students. Harassment can be a form of discrimination. Frequently used to describe unwanted sexual advances or those based on someone's perceived or actual sexual orientation, it also refers to similar discriminatory behaviors related to someone's protected civil rights. Bullying overlaps with discriminatory harassment when it is based on race, national origin, color, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, or religion; public and federally funded schools are required to address and resolve harassment under a combination of federal civil rights laws enforced by the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Justice. The Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights and the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division provide oversight and guidance to schools about how to respond in these cases. Anyone can report harassing conduct to a school; when a school receives a complaint, it must immediately take steps to investigate and resolve the situation, to prevent it from recurring, and prevent retaliation against the harassed student(s) or those who report it.

Human Rights: The idea that every person in the world deserves/is entitled to certain basic freedoms that should not be taken from them or given away. We each "own" these rights simply because we are human and as humans, we are all inherently equal. Some human rights are very basic: the right to live/be alive; to have clean water, adequate nutrition, clothing, shelter, and sanitary living conditions. People also deserve civil and political freedoms. Many people in the world currently don't have their basic needs met or access to these freedoms, and it is the responsibility of everyone to work together to help ensure the basic human rights of everyone. Standards were developed by the United Nations in 1948; the original treaty, "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," outlines thirty personal, civil and political rights agreed upon by member-nations⁶⁶. The subsequent "Declaration of the Rights of the Child" recognizes the need to safeguard the rights of children under age 18; the fifty four articles offer rights and protections including basic human needs, and many other personal and civil rights, including protection from maltreatment (e.g. including slavery and kidnapping), free and compulsory primary education, the right to choose your own religion, and even the right to relax and play⁶⁷. The notion that it is up to all of us to take responsibility to secure these rights for everyone is a key element in both UN documents.

Multicultural: Many or multiple cultures or people from diverse ethnic backgrounds. The purpose of offering multicultural education to students is to provide them with exposure to and information about people from around the world. While they may never have an opportunity to travel to different countries (or even travel our own), the more students know about others, the more likely they will be to feel empathy and connection to them—qualities important to reducing violence and prejudice and promoting peace. One problem in providing those experiences is that students may not have natural opportunities in their daily lives to become familiar with people who are different from them, or who have different

perspectives, outlooks or experiences. Too often schools resort to using a “sightseeing” approach to multicultural education (e.g. having a multicultural fair or day where students are offered food or crafts or opportunities to experience arts of different cultures). While those activities aren’t inherently bad, they typically don’t go deep enough. Providing meaningful experiences is more challenging in schools where the community, school population or faculty is not diverse, but there are many resources to help students learn about and even make genuine connections with their peers around the country, and around the globe. For example, use of digital materials allow “virtual field trips,” matching students with Pen Pals from other cultures, pairing up with a “sister school” to work on projects, or getting involved in a social action project designed for students to engage with a broader community are just some ways to do this; there are also programs that use technology (such as Skype) to foster real-time contact and interaction with other students around the world.

Latino/a: Generally refers to individuals whose ancestry is based in Mexico, most of Central and South America (including Brazil) and the parts of the Caribbean (Cuba, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico); it generally does not include countries in this same geographic area that were European colonies that did not speak “Romance Languages” (e.g. they were Dutch, English or German). While the language spoken in Latin American countries is predominantly Spanish, many speak Portuguese (Brazil), indigenous dialects, or French (Haiti). This term is generally used in this bibliography and is distinct from **Hispanic**, referring to individuals whose ancestry comes from a country where Spanish is spoken, including Spain.

Prejudice: Negative beliefs, perceptions, or attitudes towards an individual or group—commonly based on negative opinions about them. Prejudice involves making a decision about a person or group of people based on an uninformed opinion or jumping to conclusions about someone without enough knowledge. Prejudice is a *learned* attitude based on stereotypes and pre-judgments, often associated with ignorance, fear, and bias; it can lead to bullying, discrimination and hatred, and generally includes actions that violate someone’s civil rights (e.g. most commonly related to their race, ethnicity, gender, religion, social class, nationality, religion, or sexual orientation). Social scientists believe that children begin to develop stereotypes and prejudices as toddlers, often based on the attitudes and beliefs of their caregivers.

Privilege/White Privilege: The idea that some people in a society benefit from unearned advantages based on their race (White) or gender (male). Though these advantages aren’t necessarily discriminatory, the attitudes of those who have them often convey messages about power (who has it and who doesn’t) that can feel oppressive to those who do not enjoy the same privileges. Compounding the problem, those who enjoy the power and other benefits of these unearned privileges often fail to recognize the imbalance, or to acknowledge that fact when they do. These privileges form the basis for stereotypes, bigotry, racism, and sexism in our society because the root of who has power to make decisions and influence policies that affect others. Feminist scholar Peggy McIntosh of the Wellesley Centers for Women has written about this issue since the 1980s; a link to one of her essays considered a classic in anti-racist education is included in the *Teacher Resources* section of this bibliography.

People of Color: A generic term used in this bibliography to refer to a diverse group of non-White students/families, often of diverse racial, cultural, linguistic and geographic origins. Because it is an imprecise term, it is not used to refer to any single racial or ethnic group. This diverse group of individuals tends to share common experiences related to belonging to minority cultural groups: including being stigmatized, marginalized or discriminated against because of their racial or ethnic identity.

Race: A group of people who share a distinct biological/genetic heritage. In a historical context, people of the same race shared similar physical features such as skin color, and hair texture, and other features which reflect both their ancestry and geographical origins. Increasingly, especially in countries such as the

US where so many individuals are of mixed racial ancestry, and biological features are not always apparent, **racial identity** refers to someone's self-identification of their race, often based on common social, historical or political heritage as well as biological origins. This use of the term race is more synonymous with ethnicity (causing some confusion). **Racial/ethnic consciousness** refers to the awareness of impact of race/ethnicity, particularly on the lives of minority groups. There is a lot of disagreement about how to properly refer to racial groups. A recommended practice for discussions about race in classrooms is to allow individual students to self-identify which race they prefer when referring to themselves. In this bibliography, the terms consistently used to describe a character's race or ethnicity (when those are central themes of a book) are Asian, Black (or Black-American), Biracial (with ethnic qualifiers that further define what that means), Native American (and occasionally Indian, in reference to US BIA reservations), and White. (Please note that for consistency, all racial designations in this bibliography are capitalized.) As appropriate, character descriptions use specific reference to their ethnic identity, country of origin, or heritage.

Racism/Institutional Racism: A *learned* belief that some races are superior to others and which results in actions to create and sustain inequality among people of different racial and ethnic groups. Individual racism usually occurs at a personal level among individuals or small groups, and is manifested in decisions and behaviors that exclude or marginalize an individual person, or refuses to acknowledge their contributions. Institutional racism uses policies, traditions, and procedures to favor a particular racial or ethnic group (usually the dominant culture), and to justify marginalizing a minority group. This type of racism may be more subtle but may disadvantage larger populations, and be harder to change because it generally involves more sweeping or organizational changes.

Respect: In the context of classroom best practices, this concept is best defined with synonyms such as 'to value', 'to appreciate', 'to care about', 'to be considerate of' or 'to show consideration for', or 'to welcome'. Many students are more familiar with the term respect being used in a very different context (such as "respect your elders") which implies following, deferring or obeying another (usually someone who has more power). Reinforcing the notion of respect as valuing each other is more in keeping with principles of both diversity training and bullying prevention concepts.

School Culture and Climate: **School culture** refers to "the way we do things here in our school" and often refers to unspoken rules and traditions beyond those written down in school policies and procedures. These *learned* practices can result in exclusion of some students or groups, and encourage aggressive behaviors such as bullying and hazing. **School climate** refers to the way school feels to students, staff and visitors. Underlying this is how welcome and accepted individuals feel and whether they feel part of the community or apart from it. Generally speaking, adults set the tone for how students and adults treat each other. In schools where there is violence, racial tension, bullying, or other challenging behavior, student conduct improves when adults work together to create policies and procedures that consistently provide consequences for negative behavior, involve students in team-building discussions designed to improve student relationships and communication, and prosocial interactions are modeled and reinforced.

Sexual Orientation: To whom a person is sexually and romantically attracted and is currently considered to have a complex biological foundation, and not a learned behavior. Heterosexuality (attraction between members of the opposite sex) is considered the social norm in most (though not all) societies, and some cultures and religions have strong taboos about sexual orientation that varies from this view of "normal." Other categories of sexual orientation are often referred to by the acronym **LGBTQ** (referring to Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual-Transgender-Questioning), and is the term used in this bibliography. Some schools may prefer to use the broader (somewhat more ambiguous, but less controversial) terminology **gender identity and/or expression** to describe sexual orientation. Homophobic putdowns and slurs are commonly heard

in most schools—from students as young as kindergarten, and increasing as students reach Grades 6-12—so having frank honest discussions about acceptable ways to speak and treat others (and this particular form of discrimination) is an essential aspect of creating a tone of tolerance and acceptance for all students. It is important to note that individuals who identify themselves as LGBTQ have a much higher rate of suicide than the heterosexual peers; for boys in Grades 5-8, even the perception that they might be gay can lead to depression and suicidal thoughts and actions. LGBTQ youth are also more likely to be victims of violent crimes (at the hands of heterosexuals). While social acceptance for LGBTQ individuals has grown over the past decade, religious, political, and social stereotypes and biases against this group of people continues to have a negative impact on the lives of these individuals and their families. The rights of LGBTQ students in school are protected by Title IX (Educational Rights Amendment of 1972). A good resource for talking to students about LGBT issues can be found at the [Human Rights Campaign](http://www.hrc.org/resources/entry/talking-with-kids-about-lgbt-issues)ⁱⁱⁱ website; the [Welcoming Schools](http://www.welcomingschools.org/pages/a-guide-to-age-appropriate-definitions-for-students)^{iv} website also includes age-appropriate definitions. (Detailed information about both resources is provided in the *Adult Resources* section below).

Slavery: A system that treats people as property to be bought and sold, and forces them to work, generally without pay. Slaves can be held against their will and are not given the right to leave or refuse to work. Historically, slavery was practiced by most societies; and in the US, we tend to think of it in relation to practices that ended with the implementation of the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863. In more recent times, slavery has been outlawed in all countries, but there are still an estimated 20 to 30 million slaves worldwide (including many in the US). It continues through practices such as debt bondage (including sex trafficking and child prostitution), indentured servitude, captive domestic servants, adoptions in which children are forced to work as slaves, child soldiers, and forced marriage. Gender (views about the rights of women and girls in particular) and poverty play key roles in modern-day slavery. Several books in this bibliography address the issue of both modern-day and historic examples of slavery.

Stereotype: An assumption about an entire group based on limited information or experience, and inflexible attitudes. This oversimplified and subjective view of others does not allow room for individual differences (e.g. All boys are good at sports.; Kids who wear hoodies are in gangs.; or All Asian students are smart.) Stereotypes are *learned* and are often based on incorrect ideas, lack of information or experience, and inflexible attitudes. Even stereotypes that seem to convey a positive intent are harmful because they don't let people be themselves, or to follow their own abilities and interests. They also create unreasonable expectations that most members of the group will not be able to meet and by their very nature exclude those individuals. Negative stereotypes are harmful because they are often used as a way to justify limiting the rights and freedoms of particular groups, or to discriminate against them. Stereotypes are often portrayed or reinforced through images in mass media, literature, or beliefs passed on by family, peers, or community members. Stereotypes about gender are among the most prevalent worldwide and often form the basis for bullying and discrimination; there are also strong social links between the expression of gender and racial biases and stereotypes. Because stereotypes are *learned*, education can counteract them by providing students with a broader knowledge base that includes information about more diverse groups of people and ideas. Adults play an important role in modeling accepting behaviors for students and facilitating students' experiences getting to know and interact with peers and others.

iii <http://www.hrc.org/resources/entry/talking-with-kids-about-lgbt-issues>

iv <http://www.welcomingschools.org/pages/a-guide-to-age-appropriate-definitions-for-students>

Tolerance: Having a fair and open-minded, welcoming attitude towards those who are in some way different from us. Those differences may have to do with things we can outwardly observe about a person (e.g., race, physical abilities, appearance, a way of dressing or talking), but others are not as visible (e.g. attitudes, opinions, beliefs, mental abilities, sexual orientation). **Intolerance** refers to bigotry and discrimination. Both tolerance and intolerance are *learned* behaviors. Young people often equate tolerance with something negative they have to put up with or bear—so it’s important to counter that impression by emphasizing inclusion, acceptance, and welcoming new ideas and people. Students need opportunities to rehearse skills that convey their willingness to find out more about and connect with others—so be sure to provide them with strategies and practice-time.

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"The more that you read, the more things you will know.
The more you learn, the more places you'll go."
Dr. Seuss (Author, Illustrator; from I Can Read With My Eyes Shut)

A Letter to Amy

Ezra Jack Keats (*Author, Illustrator*)
Viking Juvenile: 1998

Peter plans to invite his friend Amy to his birthday party—but she'll be the only girl invited and Peter is afraid the boys won't like having her there. Rather than simply asking her to come (as he did with the boys), Peter decides to send her a written invitation—but it's unclear whether he's sending the 'letter' because she's "a special friend", or because he's ambivalent about the reaction of his other guests (a point worth considering in class discussions with older students). As he sets out to mail the letter in a thunderstorm, he unexpectedly runs into Amy, and literally knocks her down. He's rude to her and rushes off without an explanation or helping her, then feels guilty about how he acted, and worries that she won't come to his party. Amy does finally arrive, but as predicted, the boys *are* disgruntled about having a girl at the party. What should Peter do—and how does Amy contribute to the resolution? The author's signature color collages enhance the simple story, which highlights themes and dilemmas students this age can relate to: how to communicate feelings (without hurting someone else), friendships (including peer pressure that can arise when boys and girls are or want to be friends with each other), and making amends when you hurt someone (even accidentally). It's also an opportunity to talk about the tendency among this age group to "segregate" their friendships by location or activity (e.g. "You are my 'home' friend, but not my 'school' friend.")—which can lead to misunderstandings, exclusion and hurt feelings. This book can also be used to talk about other differences between friends or to begin a discussion about students' ideas about gender role norms, expectations and stereotypes (e.g. are some toys/games just for boys/girls?).

THEMES: Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences

Am I Really Different?

Evelien Van Dort (*Author*), Gerda Westernink (*Illustrator*)
Floris Books: 1998

If you are a ladybug with only one spot, you will probably feel different—unless you happen to notice that no two ladybugs are exactly alike. This appealing picture book provides a fairly realistic depiction of playground-style bullying that revolves around laughing at someone for being different; the ending makes those who excluded and made fun feel silly when they realize that they are different too. While this story can be used to soothe hurt feelings of children who teased or perceived as different, it is also useful to set boundaries and establish a climate of inclusiveness that welcomes others (rather than emphasizing differences or "uniqueness"—which may give young children confusing or unclear messages). As the story points out, we all feel different at some time or another, and the take-away message should be to gently encourage children to think and talk about how they see themselves and others, the importance of caring friends, and instilling a classroom climate where everyone is welcomed and included as part of the group (in spite of their differences). This is a great story to role play, with students portraying different ladybugs' points of view. A Spanish version Soy Realmente Diferente (not reviewed) is also available (Pujol & Amado S.L.L.: 2006)

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Team-Building

And Tango Makes Three

Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell (*Authors*), Henry Cole (*Illustrator*)
Simon and Shuster Books for Young Readers: 2005

The simple text and illustrations of this true story portray all kinds of human and animal families at the zoo. Use the simple text to celebrate the diversity in families, that not all families are the same—and the underlying message, which emphasizes that “family” consists of those who love and care for each other. The story chronicles the real-life relationship between Roy and Silo, two eleven-year-old male Chinstrap penguins in New York City’s Central Park Zoo, who developed an inseparable relationship with each other and (like other penguin partners), built a nest together. When zoo staff observed the befuddled pair trying to hatch a rock as if it were an egg, zookeeper Rob Gramzay gave them the second egg from another pair of penguins—Betty and Porkey (who’d previously had been unable to successfully care for and hatch two eggs at a time). Roy and Silo “knew just what to do” and carefully tended their adopted egg for 34 days, and became dedicated fathers to their healthy female chick, named Tango. An author’s note offers more information about penguins at the zoo. (Though not portrayed in the book, zoo staff observed the nesting behavior for two years and “tested” the pair by replacing the rock with a dummy egg made of stone and plaster, to make sure they would really know how to “incubate” a real egg). An [online reading](#)^v allows you to easily preview it, or to use it directly with students. More recently, a similar tale appeared in the spring 2014 issue of *Teaching Tolerance Magazine*: about [Z and Vielpunkt](#)^{vi}, two male Humboldt penguins in the Bremerhaven (Germany) Zoo, who also nurtured an adopted egg and chick. With students in Grades K-2, either (or both) of these stories can be used to talk about families in general, different types of families (including adoptive families), what it means to be a family or a parent, what all families have in common, and how animal parents and families are similar/different from our own.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Systems

Black, White, Just Right!

Marguerite W. Davol (*Author*), Irene Trivas (*Illustrator*)
Albert Whitman & Company: 1993

While US census data show that the number of mixed-race children in the US has grown by 50% since 2000, it is still hard to find books about mixed-race families and Biracial children. Arnold Adolph’s [black is brown is tan](#) (originally published in 1973 and reprinted in 2004), is both uneven in text and contains stereotypes of the 1970’s, when interracial marriages first became accepted (and where finally legal). *Black, White, Just Right!* is also relatively dated, but is more balanced and its depiction of a Biracial child celebrates the inclusiveness of her life. The simple text and illustrations focus on how various family members are individuals with likes and dislikes, hobbies and habits that move beyond stereotype—rather than on the exterior differences related to their skin colors. While predictable, it does reinforce the concept that it is okay for mixed-race children to celebrate their entire racial and cultural background, rather than having to identify as one or the other. A photo of the author with her “just-right” grandchildren (also evidently from an interracial family) is included and can be used to encourage children to generate their own storyline, based on the photograph. The words people use to express their racial

^v <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WYPjUa908hM>

^{vi} <http://www.tolerance.org/print/magazine/number-46-spring-2014/departments/z-and-vielpunkt>

(and/or ethnic) identity are very personal, and tend to fall in/out of favor regularly. Let children (and their families) tell you which they prefer (and why). With students in this age group, it's also worthwhile helping children to observe that no one has skin color that is really either black or white. These discussions help children better understand each other and to introduce them to ways to begin and practice the all-important discussion about personal identity. Use this in combination with Shelley Rotner's Shades of People to expand conversations about ethnic and racial diversity in general or with Deborah Wiles' Freedom Summer to introduce students to discrimination (which can be described to young children as a form of hate that happens when people of one skin color think they are better than others—and which can lead to giving them unfair advantages that they didn't earn).

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Feelings, Respecting Differences

Dear Juno

Soyung Pak (*Author*), Susan Kathleen Hartung (*Illustrator*)
Puffin: 2001

When Juno's grandmother writes to him, he has to wait for his parents to read the letter (which is written in Korean script). But, she also sends enclosures in each letter that give him clues about what she has written. With colored pencils she has sent, Juno begins to write back to his grandmother in drawings. From one picture he sends her, Juno's grandmother senses that he wants to come so he can meet her, so she sends him a miniature airplane to let him know she's on the way. This tender story reminds us that even in this electronic age, something as simple as a letter can provide a tangible link between friends and family members who are far away. This story can also be used to generate conversations about families in your classroom, and around the world—and to promote learning about different cultures, customs, and places. Be sure to ask students to share the various ways they communicate with traveling parents or with extended family and friends who live far away (e.g. letters, e-mail, phone calls, Skype, sharing pictures, planned visits, etc.). Use this as a bridge to look at actual Korean script and to learn more about the culture of this country.

THEMES: Communication, Feelings, Global Citizenship, Relationships

De Colores and Other Latin American Folksongs for Children (Anthology, Spanish Ed.)

Jose-Luis Orozco (*Author*), Elisa Kleven (*Illustrator*)
Puffin: 1999

This collection of twenty-seven authentic songs from Central and South America has been selected, arranged, and translated by popular Mexican performer and songwriter Orozco (who also performs the music in the audio CD version of the book). Included are traditional songs, rhymes, and hand games, each accompanied by simple musical arrangements and lyrics in both English and Spanish. The collection is grouped thematically (e.g. animals, birthday, counting, food, games, greetings, healing, lullabies, nonsense, peace, and special celebrations including Christmas), and each selection includes information about how it has been used in its country of origin—providing an opportunity for students to explore different oral traditions and customs, to think about how children around the world play and create games, etc. The translations from Spanish into English are well-done (i.e., they are fluent and maintain the rhythm and flow of the original). Regardless of their own ethnicity, many children will find something familiar to connect with (thanks in part to exposure to rudimentary Spanish through TV programs such as *Sesame Street*). The festive illustrations of Latino families from different countries provide a jumping-off point to talk about

different cultures and what life is like for children in these different countries. If you are not musically inclined, consider using the book and CD together! As with any other culture-specific materials, be sure to go beyond a “sightseeing” approach to learning about each country, custom and culture: enjoy the music, but use the illustrations and author notes to learn more about the people, customs, and culture behind the music, and engage students in substantive conversations about what life is like in these other places. In addition, learn more about the author and how he achieved his dreams and became successful here in the US, in his country of origin, and throughout Latin America.

THEMES: Communication, Feelings, Global Citizenship, Respecting Differences

Families Change: A Book for Children Experiencing Termination of Parental Rights

Julie Nelson (*Author*)

Free Spirit Publishing: 2006

The premise of this book is that all families change over time: some through normal transitions, like birth or children growing up and leaving home, to more sudden changes like moving to foster or adoptive families. To be clear, this bibliotherapy book is intended to help children in Grades K-5 who either have already entered the foster care system, or who have been adopted, but who still remember their birth families (i.e., it is *not* appropriate to use to prepare children or their birth families for changes in or termination of parental rights—as it could create unnecessary anxiety for the child). The simple text and colorful pictures show different types of families—including children whose grandparents and kin have full custody—and the intent is to help children understand that the changes are not their fault, and offers reassurance that it’s OK to love their new family while still loving and valuing their birth parents/families. The strong message of hope can provide a measure of support for children during these difficult transitions. The book includes resource, organizations, and tips for adults (including birth parents, foster parents, social workers, counselors, and teachers). While intended for a specific target audience, teachers will also find this book useful in classroom situations to help peers better understand and empathize with classmates in foster care—particularly because children in the foster care system are more likely to be marginalized and bullied by their peers, and often display stress-based behaviors that can be viewed as disruptive by peers and adults alike.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Team-Building

Freedom Summer

Deborah Wiles (*Author*), Jerome Lagarrigue (*Illustrator*)

Aladdin/Simon & Schuster: 2005

Best friends Joe and John Henry are a lot alike, but they are different in a way that has a critical impact on their relationship and the way others treat them: Joe is White and John Henry is Black. Narrated by Joe and set in Mississippi during the summer of 1964, the boys discover that John Henry isn’t allowed to do everything his best friend is (e.g. swim in the town pool or buy ice cream at the local store). When the newly-passed Civil Rights Act forbids segregation, the boys anticipate swimming together at the town pool, which will now be open to everyone. When the ecstatic duo race to the pool, they are shocked and dismayed to discover that it has been closed altogether—and filled in with asphalt. The obvious lesson for the boys (and student readers) is that changes happen slowly, and that what is right isn’t necessarily reflected in people’s attitudes and behavior. This book ends on a tenuously hopeful note, with the boys

entering a formerly-segregated shop to buy popsicles. Though this book is beautifully illustrated and the boys' voices are credible, several points are worth addressing with students (in developmentally appropriate ways): 1) John Henry's mother is the housekeeper for Joe's family—so Joe's apparent lack of awareness of racial tensions and experiences, or perhaps his insensitivity to his best friend's feelings, can be used to draw attention to the possible reasons behind this behavior (including the hidden ramifications of White privilege); 2) because the narrator Joe is White, the story focuses almost exclusively on his perceptions and feelings—students would benefit from exploring how this same story might have been told from John Henry's perspective and perhaps creating a parallel story told from his point of view; 3) it's important to talk directly about racism and how skin-color is perceived—e.g. teachers might want to replicate or share results of recent studies where both children of color and their White peers preferred lighter-skinned dolls, and thought dolls and people with lighter skin and hair color were “nicer” and “prettier.” Because some of these issues could benefit from self-reflection and analysis skills that are beyond the average Grade K-2 student's skill levels, teachers might consider using this book and deeper questions with students in Grades 3-5 as well.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Responsibility & Activism

Friends

Helme Heine (*Author, Illustrator*)
Aladdin/Simon & Schuster: 1997

Charlie Rooster, Johnny Mouse, and Percy Pig are best friends who do *everything* together: from playing, to doing chores “because that's what good friends do.” When night falls, they learn that sometimes friends have to be apart—but true friends can always find each other, even if only in their dreams. Exploring aspects and nuances of friendship, including traits of a true friend, is an important developmental task for students in the early grades, as are fostering skills required to make and keep friends (e.g., sharing, consideration, cooperation, compromise, thoughtfulness, kindness, and teamwork.) Because the characters are a diverse group of animals, this book can be used as a gentle tool to broach the ideas of bias and stereotypes, accepting and respecting differences and the art of making others feel welcome. Students might also be asked to share their opinions about why so many picture books portray children as animal characters. Also available in Spanish and the original German.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Feelings, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Team-Building

Great Kapok Tree, The: A Tale of the Amazon Rainforest

Lynn Cherry (*Author, Illustrator*)
HMH Books for Young Readers: 2010

When a man sent to the Amazon rain forest to chop down a great kapok tree grows tired, and falls asleep, the forest's diverse animal inhabitants and a child from the Yanomamo tribe intervene as he dozes: each whispers a message about the importance of every tree and the interdependence that all living things have on one another. When the man awakens and sees all the jungle residents surrounding him, he simply leaves his ax and “walks out of the rain forest.” The author traveled deep into the rain forests of Brazil to write and illustrate this book which emphasizes the interconnectedness of all living things. This beautifully illustrated book includes world maps bordered by detailed drawings of rare and endangered species. This is a great “Earth Day” book that provides many obvious connections to science and social

studies curricula at almost every grade level (e.g. rainforest canopy, camouflage, predators/prey, endangered species, ozone, erosion, habitats, conservation, ecology, pollution and recycling). It also provides many ways to open conversations about the lives of indigenous peoples, environmental stewardship, how each and every one of our actions has an impact that goes beyond us, and how we each have a responsibility to care for our planet. Because it contains dense text, it could be used with older primary students (Grade 3-5) as well—with these students, consider tying it into the study of responding to urban development to avoid sprawl, or the political debate over economic growth versus preservation of natural resources, the depletion of the ozone layer, potential resources (like medications) from rainforests. Available in Spanish with co-author Alma Flor Ada (1994) (not reviewed). A personal message from the author about the importance of environmental stewardship and the impact of destroying even one tree is included.

THEMES: Communication, Global Citizenship, Justice/Injustice, Serving the Community, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems

Help!: A Story of Friendship

Holly Keller (*Author, Illustrator*)

Greenwillow Books; 2007

Mouse, Hedgehog, Rabbit, Squirrel, and Snake are friends, but one day Mouse hears a rumor from Skunk (who heard from Fox) that snakes are dangerous, especially to mice. Now, Mouse has fallen into a deep hole and is in trouble, and it turns out that only Snake can help him. Mouse must make a decision about whether to rely on rumors, or trust his friend. The story ends well as Snake shows he is a true friend. This simple story offers a great way to encourage students to share their own experience and feelings about gossip: Can friendship survive gossip? Should friends stick together, no matter what? What can friends do when a friend's feelings are hurt, or they are in need of a helping hand? This story can also be used to subtly introduce concepts and examples of prejudice and discrimination. Students will love to role-play this story, but be sure to help them discover both the positive and negative roles that bystanders played!

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Team-Building

Horace and Morris and Mostly Dolores

James Howe (*Author*), Amy Walrod (*Illustrator*)

Athenaeum Books for Young Readers; 2003

In another anthropomorphized tale, three young mice, Horace, Morris, and Dolores are best friends who do everything together. The writing reflects this author's dry humor, but there is a serious lesson about gender-based segregation and exclusion that can be common at this age. When the boys join a no-girls-allowed club, the ever-resourceful Dolores (who wonders what kind of club wouldn't allow girls) decides to join a no-boys-allowed club just next door. Neither club is what the friends expected (or like), and they miss each other. Bored Dolores copes by leaving the girls' club with kindred-spirit Chloris. They start a new all-inclusive group and graciously invite the relieved boys, along with Boris, a fifth mouse, to join them. Students and adults alike will find the clever word-play and humorous illustrations engaging (pay attention to amusing details in the illustrations). The book encourages concepts like sharing, cooperation, inclusion, communication, being yourself, and resisting peer pressure and exclusion. Friendship is a key theme—and includes ideas about finding friends who share your interests, valuing your friends no matter

who they are, exploring ways that friendships and interests can change over time, and how to reach out to friends after a rift. Another central theme promotes the message that limited ideas about gender roles can interfere with happiness and friendships. While Dolores is a strong and assertive female character (who takes initiative several times in this story), both the text and drawings unnecessarily (and a bit gratuitously) stereotype "girl" and "boy" behavior and activity preferences: the boys' club activities are portrayed as fun and interesting (though overwhelming), but the girl's club activities are characterized as over-the-top-boring, frivolous, and lame. These stereotypes are worth noting and discussing with students: Which activities would you think were fun? Are certain toys or games just for boys/girls?).

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences

Horace and Morris Join the Chorus (but what about Dolores?)

James Howe (*Author*), Amy Walrod (*Illustrator*)
Athenaeum Books for Young Readers: 2005

In another tale in a series about these three best friends, this one focuses on exclusion that can result when friends have different talents or abilities. When the trio tries out for the school chorus, Dolores doesn't get selected and feels hurt, angry, and resentful. She tries to entertain herself, but is lonely and feels sorry for herself because her friends are too busy rehearsing. When the choral director tells Dolores that she doesn't have an ear for music, she writes him a letter in compelling rhyme to plead her case. He reconsiders, offering to give her voice lessons to help her achieve her goal. While this book doesn't promote cultural competence per se, it does highlight the value of resilience and the importance of persistence in pursuing your dreams. There are many opportunities to discuss feelings: about being excluded, not being "good enough" at something you enjoy, and having friends who value and support you just the way you are. Or, focus on skills like maintaining friendships; letting a friend know you care, even if you are busy; being diplomatic (being kind and constructive); and not making assumptions about others.

THEMES: Communication, Feelings, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences

How to Heal a Broken Wing

Bob Graham (*Author, Illustrator*)
Candlewick: 2008

In a big world, small things often get lost or go unnoticed. In the bustle of city streets, "No one saw the bird fall." But, young Will notices the hurt pigeon lying on the ground and convinces his sympathetic mother to take it home. They gently wrap the injured bird and care for it—bandaging its broken wing, nurturing it back to health, even saving a single fallen feather as a talisman of hope for when the bird is healed and ready to be set free to fly again. This simple story encourages compassion, caring, kindness, and helping others; it uses the fact that caring for animals resonates with young children and is a way to reinforce these concepts in a developmentally appropriate way that reaches them at a "heart-level" of understanding. Filled with detailed illustrations (which will be familiar to New York City-dwellers), the book can also be used to help students practice reading, interpreting and labeling the body language of both the boy and his parents (a skill that many children this age need to practice, but that is especially important for students with behavioral or sensory problems). Use it also to delve more deeply into notions of persistence and dedication to reaching goals; hope, the possibility of new beginnings and

“beating the odds”; to encourage children to notice the small things (and the impact that can have); and helping to care for earth’s creatures (even the “lowly” pigeon). It can also be used as a bibliotherapy book to discuss a serious illness or the lengthy process involved in healing and recovery (of any sort).

THEMES: Bullying, Communication, Feelings, Serving the Community, Social Responsibility & Activism

Invisible Boy, The

Trudi Ludwig (*Author*), Patrice Barton (*Illustrator*)

Knopf Books for Young Readers: 2013

Shy bespectacled Brian feels invisible since no one notices him or asks him to join activities. He’s even disregarded by his overwrought teacher, whose attention is often monopolized by students who act up (or, in Brian’s words, “take up a lot of space”) and is ignored and isolated when he sits next to his peers at lunch. Brian spends most of his time alone, watching other students or drawing fantastic creatures and superheroes that have the power to make friends. Things begin to change when a new boy, Justin, joins the class. When the other children ignore and tease Justin, Brian slips him a friendly note—and that starts the ball rolling. When Justin invites Brian to team up on a class project, Brian’s drawing talent is revealed. His peers gradually begin to include him, and as Brian becomes more involved, his character literally comes to life: illustrations of Brian change from shades of grey (a visual representation of his loneliness and isolation) and gradually become more colorful and the artwork provides a vivid visual impression of Brian’s feelings. His transition from isolation to acceptance and quickly having several friends is less realistic and the story might not hold the interest of Grade 2 students. This book emphasizes the power of exclusion, small kindnesses, friendship, and compassion, and the idea that every child deserves a friend. Use it to ask whether students have ever felt invisible (or know someone else who does, or who treats someone that way). It also highlights ways adults can modify their own behaviors to model both tone and actions that help every child feel welcome and included. As in all of this author’s books, some discussion questions are included for teachers and parents.

THEMES: Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences

Jacob’s Eye Patch

Beth Kobliner and Jacob Shaw (*Authors*), Jules Feiffer (*Illustrator*)

Simon & Schuster: 2013

This autobiographical picture book shares a day-in-the-life of a young boy who has worn an eye patch since he was five days old to treat amblyopia, commonly referred to as “lazy eye.” Written by the eponymous Jacob (at age nine) and his mom, this book shows the challenges of being different. Humorously told, the story follows Jacob and his family as they hurry to buy a special light-up globe before the store closes, and the last globe is sold out. There are many delays and interruptions along the way to the store, including queries and stares by curious (and often intrusive) adults and children wanting to know about Jacob’s eye patch. Jacob ultimately gets his globe and meets a new friend who “has something different” too—and becomes more aware of other people’s feelings. Included is a short narrative about how the real Jacob felt about his eye patch as well as his mother’s recommendations about positive ways to respond to someone

vii www.JacobsEyePatch.com

who looks "different." Be sure to include those ideas in your reading and discussion of this book with students. A [weblink](#) includes a teaching guide, a tip sheet for adults called *9 Tips to Help Kids Cope with Differences*, DIY stickers that ask students to say what their "difference" is, and a place to share personal stories.

THEMES: Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences

Little Dog Lost: The True Story of a Brave Dog Named Baltic

Mônica Carnesi (*Author, Illustrator*)

Nancy Paulsen Books: 2012

Based on true story (2010), this book tells the tale of a dog's dramatic rescue by a research ship on the Baltic Sea. The story begins when a curious dog wanders onto Poland's frozen Vistula River, only to be swept away on a fast-moving sheet of ice. A group of children notice something out at sea and once they realize it is a dog adrift, they quickly take action and try to get help. Many people get involved in trying to rescue the dog, but are unsuccessful in reaching him and he is presumed dead, swept out to sea. After two nights and seventy-five miles, the scared and hungry little dog was finally saved by a ship's crew out in the Baltic Sea. The crew searched in vain for the dog's owners and ultimately adopted him and affectionately nicknamed him "Baltic." An author's note and map are included. Stories such as this one that involve animals provide a wonderful vehicle to elicit deeper conversation among students about their feelings, fears and hopes. It can also be used to reinforce the need to help others (including animals) when we can, and emphasizes the amount of cooperation and communication it took to make this miraculous rescue possible. Consider supplementing this book by reading actual news clips and watching a brief [Associated Press news story](#)^{viii} of the rescue on YouTube.

THEMES: Communication, Feelings, Global Citizenship, Serving the Community, Social Responsibility

Marisol McDonald Doesn't Match

Monica Brown (*Author*), Sara Palacios (*Illustrator*)

Children's Book Press (Bilingual Ed.): 2011

Marisol McDonald's red hair and brown skin seem as contradictory to others as her name. Marisol is full of contradictions: from her favorite lunch (peanut butter and jelly burritos) to how she writes her name (combining cursive and print) to her choice of clothing and her playground exploits (playing soccer dressed as a pirate princess). While these things seem natural to Marisol, other people wonder why she can't be just "one way or the other." While others try to put this Biracial (Peruvian-Scottish-American) girl into a box, Marisol McDonald is quite happy with herself and the fact that she doesn't match. This book has a strong female protagonist and offers a positive model that can help young Biracial or bicultural children feel comfortable in their own skin. It reinforces the idea that culture is an important aspect of who we are and that all aspects of our heritage (and individuality) are of value. For other students, it provides a vehicle to address the tendency that children in this age group have of wanting to "pigeonhole" people they perceive as different from themselves, and encourages discussion about ethnicity and different cultures in a developmentally appropriate way. The author is herself of mixed ancestry: a mestiza Peruvian American

viii <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X-JwFvMMG0k>

of European, Jewish, and Amerindian heritage. The book is bilingual—with the English text on one side and the Spanish text on the other.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Team-Building

Martin's Big Words

Doreen Rappaport (*Author*), Brian Collier (*Illustrator*)
Hyperion Book CH: 2007

This beautifully illustrated pictorial biography introduces young readers to the life of Martin Luther King Jr., a powerful orator and inspirational leader of the Civil Rights Movement. Using simple text punctuated with quotations from King's writings and speeches, the book follows him from his youth (where inspiration to "get big words" is attributed to watching his father preach) to his assassination in the midst of a garbage workers strike. It includes childhood experiences like seeing "White Only" signs, his role in the Montgomery bus strike, and his efforts as a pacifist and civil rights crusader. Any of the inspirational quotes can be used to spark additional discussion or used as writing prompts with slightly older students (in Grades 2-3). Appropriate for students in Grades K-3, use this book to introduce King's legacy, including his ability to bring Blacks and Whites together to fight for civil rights, or to introduce concepts like passive resistance and peaceful protest (which older students will more likely grasp and put into context of actual events). Concepts such as family support and encouragement, courage, spiritual strength, resilience and persistence are themes presented. A brief chronology and bibliography provide additional resources for readers. This book might be used in conjunction with Eve Bunting's [The Cart That Carried Martin](#) (2013) (not reviewed) about King's funeral procession through Atlanta.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Serving the Community, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems

My First Biography: Harriet Tubman

Marion Dane Bauer (*Author*) and Tammie Lyon (*Illustrator*)
Scholastic Nonfiction: 2010

One of a series by this same author, this book introduces students to the famous and often-written-about slave Harriet Tubman, her escape, and perseverance (in spite of incredible danger) to free countless others. Her individual efforts were inspirational in her own time, and can be used to encourage and inspire today's young students to stand up for what is right, to show courage in helping others, and (ultimately) to instill in them the value of fighting for equity and freedom for people everywhere. The simple text and bold illustrations are great as a read-aloud but also make it accessible to beginning readers. The book simply captures the basic elements of what it meant to be a slave, the drama and uncertainty of life on the Underground Railroad, and also mentions Tubman's role as a Union spy during the Civil War. Students will want to learn more about this courageous woman.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems, Violence

My Name is Gabriela: The Life of Gabriela Mistral

Monica Brown (*Author*), John Parra (*Illustrator*)

Cooper Square Publishing (*Bilingual Ed.*): 2005

This beginner's biography is the part of a set that includes poet Pablo Neruda and author Gabriela Garcia Marquez. Written in the first person, the simple poetic text follows the life of the Chilean-born poet and teacher who became the first Latina woman to win the Nobel Prize for literature (in 1945). Born Lucila Godoy Alcayaga at the end of the nineteenth century, the story begins in her childhood, where she chooses a new name (because she likes the sound of it) and teaches herself to read. The story captures her love of words and stories, and her personal journey to become a renowned poet and teacher who inspired children across many countries to let their voices be heard. Her life emphasizes for all children the importance of following their dreams. The illustrations are evocative of the poetess' works and the English and Spanish texts appear side-by-side (English on the left hand page; Spanish, on the right).

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Responsibility, Team-Building

Nelson Mandela

Kadir Nelson (*Author, Illustrator*)

Katherine Tegen Books: 2013

This beautifully illustrated picture-book biography introduces young readers to the iconic Nelson Mandela in simple free-verse. The story begins with the young boy named Rolihlahla ("troublemaker") and his tribal upbringing in Qunu. When his father dies, he is sent away to a boarding school at the age of nine, where he is renamed Nelson. Young Nelson sees firsthand the inequities of apartheid for Black South Africans, and grows determined to fight for change. As a young lawyer, he becomes a political leader against racism—students will notice parallels between the "Whites Only" signs on the South Africa beaches and similar signs in Deborah Wiles' Freedom Summer. While Mandela's arrest and years of imprisonment and hard labor are captured in the story, they are balanced by illustrations of the protests to free him, his joyful release from prison, and his triumph when he is elected president. His commitment to his principles and struggles to bring equality for all South Africans, regardless of the color of their skin, is a key talking point: His beliefs and resolve (and great personal sacrifice) led him on his lifelong quest to create a more just world. The powerful images of Mandela project his calm strength, resilience and courage—use them to encourage students to consider the emotions conveyed throughout the book and to talk about whether they think he ever felt angry, and what he did to redirect those feelings into positive actions. An author's note provides a more detailed retelling of Mandela's life and fight against apartheid, his many achievements, and his Nobel Peace Prize; a short list of additional resources is also included. This may be more information than young students in Grades K-2 can absorb—but, be sure to read it as part of your preparation, to answer students' questions or to stimulate discussion. The book states that it supports the Common Core State Standards; it is appropriate for students through Grade 5.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Global Citizenship, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems, Team Building, Violence

One

Katherine Otoshi (*Author, Illustrator*)
KO Kids Books: 2008

This simple book uses colors and numbers to cleverly introduce young students to bullying and the notion of being proactive bystanders. When Red begins to pick on Blue, it gets hotter and bigger and soon intimidates the other colors, and they are too afraid to say anything. When One comes along, it's sturdy and funny and all the colors like it. One tells Red: "If someone is mean and picks on me, I, for One, stand up and say, No." All the other colors follow One's lead and also become numbers (Yellow becomes Two, Green, Three, etc.). Red begins to feel left out and tries to bully Blue, but Blue ignores him and becomes Six. The rest of the numbers stick up for Blue, but instead of excluding Red, Blue invites it to join the counting game, too. The essential messages, that even one person can make a difference and that the social power of group responses can be used in positive ways (literally, and cleverly: strength in numbers), is emphasized by the ending: "Sometimes it just takes One" and Blue's final overture to Red. Be sure to emphasize the positive aspects of working together (collaborating, and inclusion rather than excluding or "ganging up" on others). With young children who are still learning friendship-making skills, be careful to avoid the expectation that they have to be friends with everyone (especially with those who hurt them). Instead, emphasize that exclusion and unkind behaviors are unacceptable. Use the way colors are used to represent moods and feelings to introduce vocabulary that describes feelings and emotional nuances with young students (something many children this age need to have introduced or reinforced).

THEMES: Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Team-Building

Other Side, The

Jacqueline Woodson (*Author*), E.B. Wilson (*Illustrator*)
G.P. Putnam's Sons: 2001

Clover's mom says it isn't safe to cross the fence that segregates their Black side of town from the White side where Annie lives. Annie's mother has given her daughter similar instructions not to cross the fence—a metaphor for the divide between Blacks and Whites in the Jim Crow-era South where they live. Narrated by Clover, the two first watch each other from a distance. (Use the illustrations to help students notice how the girls' body language and facial expressions provide clues to their ambivalence about their mothers' directives). As the summer progresses, the girls form a tenuous friendship, find a way to circumvent their mothers' instructions, and use the physical barrier as a place to sit together. Clover pretends not to care when her friends react at the sight of her sitting with a White girl, but by summer's end, Annie risks joining Clover's friends jumping rope (on the "Black" side of the fence). The book ends on a hopeful note: "Someday somebody's going to come along and knock this old fence down," says Annie, and Clover agrees. Discussion points include: What might have happened if Clover had crossed over onto Annie's side of the fence? What do you think Clover's friends thought when Annie asked if she could jump rope with them? Why did they say "no"? Why did the adults see the fence differently than the girls? How do real or imaginary fences separate us from people who are different? What did the girls do to make each other feel welcome? How do you think they felt the first time they sat on the fence together? Use this book in conjunction with [Freedom Summer](#) to compare the characters' feelings and views about segregation and friendship. This tenth-anniversary edition includes an author's note.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems

Owen and Mzee: The True Story of a Remarkable Friendship

Isabella and Craig Hatkoff and Dr. Paula Kahumba (*Authors*), Peter Greste (Photographer)

Scholastic: 2006

A single newspaper article and photo of Owen the 600 pound baby hippo and Mzee, a 130-year-old giant tortoise prompted the six-year-old co-author to persuade her father to write a book about this unique friendship. Though this story contains some potentially disturbing material for young children (e.g. Owen is tragically separated from his pod of hippos during the 2004 tsunami that affected Kenya and many other South African coastal nations; and his dramatic rescue is challenging and uncertain), but the text and illustrations emphasize the positive rather than the tragedy that is at the center of this true story. Greste's photographs document the work of the dedicated staff at the Kenyan animal sanctuary and their successful rescue and care for Owen, and capture the relationship between this animal pair—from Owen's first bids for protection, to Mzee's tolerance and acceptance, the two animals are shown contentedly eating, swimming, snuggling, and playing together. Other versions of this story by the same authors include Owen and Mzee: Language of Friendship (2007); both will appeal to students through Grade 5. Input from naturalist Kahumba provides information about the animals, their caregivers, habitats, and tsunamis. Follow students' interests to talk about friendship, nurturing/caring, communication styles, love, acceptance, companionship, and persistence. Or, approach topics such as loss, healing, hope and remembrance; or make connections to social studies themes (including disaster relief efforts) or science (including animal behavior). Questions to ask students include: How do these animals communicate their feelings to each other? Why do you think they like/care about each other? How can you tell? Do you think they love each other? Since one of the authors is also a child, it would be really interesting for students to consider how her interest and persistence helped bring this story to light—and consider ways they can take steps to make their own hopes and dreams come true.

THEMES: Communication, Feelings, Global Citizenship, Relationships, Social Responsibility & Activism

Quiet Book, The

Deborah Underwood (*Author*), Renata Liwska (*Illustrator*)

HMH Books for Young Readers: 2010

While touted as a bedtime book, this charming picture book has many uses in Grade K-2 classrooms. The simple text and illustrations of animal "children" portray the many different aspects (and emotions) associated with quiet moments: From the peaceful "Swimming under water quiet," to the dread of the about-to-get-a-shot "Pretending you're invisible quiet", to anticipation-laden "Top of the roller coaster quiet," to the chastened "I just got in trouble quiet," the anxiety of "Last kid to be picked up from school quiet," and more. The illustrations accurately capture each character's facial expressions and body language—each page tells a story. Ask students to extrapolate on each vignette (e.g. what do you think happened just before this? What will happen next?) or to create their own "quiet stories." Use the illustrations to encourage students to practice reading and interpreting body language and social cues, discover the emotions behind different kinds of quiet, and to learn the vocabulary to describe more nuanced feelings. These skills lead to more accurate expression of feelings and foster empathy. Pair this with books like Lana Button's Willow's Whispers or Trudi Ludwig's The Invisible Boy to explore different types of temperaments (and ways to include and welcome children who are quiet, shy, or introverted).

THEMES: Communication, Feelings, Peer Relationships

Shades of People

Shelley Rottner and Sheila N. Kelly (*Authors*)

Holiday House: 2010

People come in lots of shades of colors, even in the same family. This collection of vibrant color photographs of happy children of varying skin tones is complemented with simple short text to inspire young children to notice and look beyond the obvious “skin that we are in.” The opening sentence (“Have you noticed that people come in many different shades?”) sets the tone to talk about racial and ethnic diversity—explaining that “Our skin is just our covering, like wrapping paper. And, you can't tell what someone is like from the color of their skin.”

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Feelings, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences

Sojourner Truth's Step-Stomp Stride

Andrea Pinkney (*Author*), Dennis Pinkney (*Illustrator*)

Jump At The Sun: 2009

Though there are still not enough books written by and about people of color, teachers and families now have more balanced portrayals of famous (and less well-known) people of color than in the previous decade. This fictionalized account of a well-known slave-turned-abolitionist and feminist offers a richer view of her personality. While still showing the negative aspects of slavery, it provides details in a way that are accessible and inspiring, not overwhelming or frightening. Isabella/Belle Baumfree was born and raised in slavery on a New York farm before slavery was abolished there. At nine, she was sold off to another estate—away from her family—enduring four owners in as many years. Belle was simply a commodity to her owners who viewed her physical strength (she was 6 feet tall and allegedly as strong as many men) as an asset to be capitalized on. Her fiery spirit allowed her to endure and persevere thorough cruelty and numerous losses. In 1826, an adult Belle (who later changed her name to Sojourner Truth) fled with one child (and later successfully sued to regain another after the state of New York passed legislation emancipating slaves). Though in her own words, Sojourner Truth states that she did not run away, she walked, in the words of this story, she “...refused to stop until she saw hope.” With the help of Quakers, she was freed, and became a maid in New York City. With her young children in tow, she continued her travels (at some peril) to advocate for freedom and women’s rights. A forceful and charismatic speaker, the story shows Truth at the 1851 women’s rights convention in Akron, Ohio, where she delivered her famous “And ain’t I a woman?” speech in response to men’s claims that women are too weak to deserve equal rights. Students in Grades K-2 will find the lyrical conversational style engaging when read aloud and will also appreciate the power of this remarkable woman. A well-researched endnote “More about Sojourner Truth” is included, along with photographs and a bibliography. With students in grades 3-5, engage them with background about this period of US history, to discuss connections between the abolitionist and the Civil Rights movements, to introduce the ongoing struggle for equal rights for women in the US and internationally, and to discuss concepts such as courage, privilege, racial injustice, social responsibility, and activism. Be sure to have students look up the word “sojourner” and consider why Sojourner Truth chose it as her name.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Respecting Differences, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems, Violence

Tea Cakes for Tosh

Kelly Starling Lyons (*Author*), E. B. Lewis (*Illustrator*)

Putnam Juvenile: 2012

Young Tosh loves listening to his beloved grandmother's stories (and eating her delicious tea cakes). The recipe was his great-great-great-great-grandma Ida's specialty when she was a cook (and slave). Though the children of slaves weren't permitted to have the special treat, courageous Grandma Ida found a way to share them with the children—which are used to symbolize the sweet taste of freedom to come. Tosh has heard this story so many times he knows it by heart—so when Grandma Honey begins forgetting things (including the cherished recipe), he helps her to remember. This touching story celebrates family connections and the important traditions of oral history in families. It also fosters caring and empathy. Tosh's confusion as he deal with his aging grandmother's dementia is dealt with very sensitively as he finds a way to maintain his connection with his grandmother and continue her tradition through baking. The illustrations alternate between color (present) and sepia (past). Young students will love the opportunity to make the tea cakes (the full recipe is included). This author has written other children's books focusing on different aspects of Black history and culture that are also worth exploring.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Relationships, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems

Too Tall Houses

Gianna Marino (*Author, Illustrator*)

Viking Juvenile: 2012

Friends Owl and Rabbit happily live side-by-side in two small huts--until Rabbit's garden gets in the way of Owl's view. Tensions rise as Owl builds his house a little taller, blocking the sun from Rabbit's vegetables. Of course, Rabbit builds *his* house taller...and construction continues until both houses are ridiculously tall, and the two are no longer friends. A strong wind reminds them that placing their individual needs above their friendship didn't work, so they join forces to build one house fit for the two of them—and find that it is a much better way for them to remain friends. Like many books written for this age group, the main characters are anthropomorphized, but the messages about friendship, the importance of listening as part of communicating, competition and compromise, perspective-taking, and balancing personal desires with cooperation are clear. Teachers need to be alert to the fact that students under fourth grade are likely to lack both the cognitive development and social skills needed to cooperate or compromise on their own, or to see things from another person's point of view. It's essential for adults to continually revisit these concepts and to adults to model concrete strategies and verbiage for them to help them learn to deal with conflicts and disagreements.

THEMES: Communication, Feelings, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Team-Building

Two Bobbies: A True Story of Hurricane Katrina, Friendship, and Survival

Kirby Larson & Mary Nethery (*Authors*), Jean Cassels (*Illustrator*)

Walker Childrens: 2008

Two stranded pets, a dog and a cat (each with a bobbed tail), miraculously struggle and survive together for four months without food, water, or human assistance after Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans

in 2005. Finally rescued and taken to an animal shelter by a kind construction worker, the pair was briefly separated, but each was inconsolable and suffered such anxiety and distress, that workers reunited them. It was only then that shelter staff discovered Bob Cat was blind, and had been dependent on Bobbie as his seeing-eye dog—making the pairs’ devotion and survival even more remarkable. When efforts to locate their owners were unsuccessful (they were featured on CNN), the two were adopted by a woman named Melinda (a photo of the pair with their new owner is provided). Since the pre-rescue details of their lives were unknown, parts of this book have been imagined. Like many books about homelessness and disasters written for this age group, this one focuses on the plight of abandoned and displaced animals, rather than people, or graphic details of the event (the notion being that students will be less traumatized and will relate to the animals). While both of these things are true, young children in particular need to be reassured that they will be safe and cared for; teachers are encouraged not to shy away from answering questions about the effects these events had on the children and families who experienced them. Additionally, children in many communities have themselves been the victims of tragic losses, catastrophic life events, and dramatic changes in circumstances (e.g. accidents, random acts of violence, fires, tornadoes, hurricanes, homelessness, floods, and even war). Talking about their feelings, engendering empathy and compassion in peers (along with specific ways they can demonstrate their caring for those in need) can help reassure them. Children may be interested in knowing that the authors donate 10% of their proceeds to the Best Friends Animal Society that cared for Bobbie and Bob Cat and many other deserted Katrina animals; use this to emphasize how volunteers from around the globe traveled to New Orleans to help. Use this book to highlight friendship, home, working together, and helping others.

THEMES: Communication, Feelings, Peer Relationships, Serving the Community, Social Responsibility & Activism, Team-Building

Unlikely Friendships for Kids: The Monkey and the Dove and Four Other Stories of Animal Friendships

Jennifer S. Holland (*Author, Photographer*)
Workman Publishing Company: 2012

Since stories about animals are consistently appealing to young students, this book is included as part of this section as a vehicle to initiate conversations about topics like friendship, differences, and bias in a way they can relate to. This most recent installment of the popular series written by National Geographic’s Jennifer Holland is a collection of five short stories (each in its own chapter) with lots of engaging photographs. Geared for younger students (ages seven and up), it includes five of the clearest, most interesting stories from the original book about the mysteries of love, friendship and attraction, and the ways that creatures of all species can find common bonds. Each provides an obvious way to talk with young students about human differences, similarities, friendships, acceptance, and welcoming others. Selecting and reading aloud is recommended with this age group, but reluctant readers in Grades 3-5 may be able to handle this one on their own. The last story includes the death of one animal in a featured friendships; it is very sad and may be too disturbing for some children, but does provides a concrete way to broach the topic of death (as a part of nature), feelings of grief and loss (for a human or animal).

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems

Visiting Day

Jacqueline Woodson (*Author*), James Ransome (*Illustrator*)
Scholastic Press: 2002

This bibliotherapy book is about a little girl living with her grandmother, hopefully waiting for her father's release from prison. The story focuses on the child's anticipation and actually doesn't reveal the destination of the visit until the end—which opens it up for broader discussion among students. Told without judgment, stigma, or sentimentality, it also doesn't reveal the reasons the girl's father is imprisoned (or what happened to her mother), but focuses instead on the joy she feels when she and her father are reunited during their brief monthly visits at the prison. Young students with an incarcerated parent can relate to having only limited supervised visits with them and this book lets them know they are not alone. It also depicts the support and camaraderie that families of other inmates provide each other—clearly shown as source of strength for them. This story can be used can help other students consider how it might feel to be this child (building empathy and perspective-taking) and can be used to explore how they deal with other types of parental separation (e.g. parents in the armed services, children in foster care, children cared for by relatives or who have parents who are hospitalized or in treatment programs). The grandmother's unconditional love, strength, and caring rituals also reinforce the idea that there are all kinds of families—and love is what makes a family (and keeps it intact while some members are away). The book avoids prison stereotypes by depicting the dad as a well-groomed handsome man, who anticipates his daughter's visits by marking the days on a calendar and hanging her artwork—but some students will need support if their own experiences aren't quite so "sunny."

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Social Systems

What About Bear?

Suzanne Bloom (*Author, Illustrator*)
Boyd's Mills Press: 2012

This recent installment to the Bear and Goose series (which includes *A Splendid Friendship Indeed*, 2005) continues to explore friendship, friendship-making skills, and making new friends without hurting or losing old ones. This particular book explores the dilemma of what can happen when a third individual joins two friends, and one is excluded. It focuses on relational issues such as being left out, different communication styles and personalities, and can be used to encourage students to practice kind things they can say and do to nurture friendships. The simple story also can be used to discuss the ways we are each unique, to emphasize the importance of acceptance of diversity, or to problems-solve ways to stand up for friends. It also introduces the worthy idea that you don't have to be friends with everyone, but should be expected to treat everyone with kindness and respect. As with many other relationship-building skills, students this age need to see adults model behaviors for them, to have guidance "operationalizing" directives, and to practice skills repeatedly; adults will need to revisit concepts before students eventually reach mastery.

THEMES: Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences

What's Your Favorite Animal?

Eric Carle (*Author, Illustrator, Ed.*)
Henry Holt & Company: 2014

Compiled by Eric Carle, this collaborative book showcases the unique styles of fourteen contemporary (mostly American) picture-book illustrators, and devotes a double-page spread to each artist's answer to the title question. Each selection depicts a different style and the accompanying text offers an interesting and often amusing explanation of why the artist chose that particular animal—in the form of poems, narrative and stories. The book ends with biographical paragraphs and photos (often childhood snapshots) of the various contributors. On the surface, this book has no connection with bullying or most of the themes listed as elements of cultural competence, but the fact that each of the contributors have widely different views and approaches to answering the same simple question can be used to encourage students to explore different ways they express themselves, and to notice how each illustrator's style is an expression of their individuality, identity, and diversity. Students of all ages should be encouraged to find and express their own talents—and they can be encouraged to use that passion and energy to create something together and build teamwork in the classroom.

THEMES: Communication, Feelings, Respecting Differences, Team-Building

When Marian Sang: The True Recital of Marian Anderson

Pam Munoz Ryan (*Author*), Brian Selznik (*Illustrator*)
Scholastic: 2002

Philadelphia-born contralto and classical singer Marian Anderson had an astounding three-octave singing range. One of the greatest and most celebrated American singers of the twentieth century, she was hardly known in the US, because of her race. Today she is best known for her historic 1939 open-air concert at the Lincoln Memorial. When protests by conservative groups almost prevented it, President and Eleanor Roosevelt intervened on her behalf and the concert drew an integrated crowd of 75,000 people as well as countless others who listened to it on the radio. While this momentous event showcased her amazing voice, the strength of her character, and the struggles of the times in which she lived, it is only part of her story (she was also an ardent and active supporter of the Civil Rights Movement). Her struggle mirrored the plight of many artists of color in her time: music schools ignored her applications and even after she began singing professionally, many venues refused to feature Black performers. She began singing in her church choir at age six, but racism prevented her from achieving her dream of singing with the Metropolitan Opera until nearly fifty years later. Ironically, Ms. Anderson was an overwhelming success in Europe, and received many invitations to join opera companies there and world-renowned conductor Arturo Toscanini announced that a voice like hers could be heard "only once in a hundred years." Beautifully illustrated in shades of brown and sepia tones, this biographic sketch of Ms. Anderson's remarkable life includes an audio CD recording of the famous concert. Use this to call attention to traits like courage, faith, grace under pressure, and the ways that persistence and hope can help students rise above adversity to articulate and work to achieve their own dreams. Live footage of the concert can be viewed [online](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=maONYTMf2pk)^{ix}.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Feelings, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Respecting Differences

^{ix} <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=maONYTMf2pk>

Willow's Whispers

Lana Button (*Author*), Tania Howells (*Illustrator*)
Kids Can Press, Ltd.: 2010

Shy Willow speaks so softly that no one can hear her. Other children ask her to sit with them, but they can't hear her answer, so they ignore her; her teacher gives her the wrong kind of juice because she doesn't hear Willow's response. Willow's shyness consistently gets in the way of making friends, participating in class, and even results in her being teased and excluded. Most of all, it makes her unhappy. When Willow's father tells her she'll find her voice someday, she invents a way to make her words louder by creating a "magic" megaphone from a recycled cardboard tube. She discovers that when she speaks into it, her words come out louder, and people start to listen and include her in activities. When her new prop breaks at the end of the day, she realizes it wasn't really magic; but she's learned that she likes being heard, and decides to speak up in her own "strong voice." While the ending is a pat, and even Willow's name and the wispy drawings of her character constitute a sort of stereotyping (a point worth talking about with older children), both the illustrations and use of tiny type for her whispered responses cleverly capture the emotions and social dilemmas faced by shy children in our increasingly noisy and fast-paced society. Ultimately, the book provides a developmentally appropriate way to validate the feelings and experiences of quiet or shy young children, and can be used to build empathy, understanding and support from those who are more outgoing. Use this as an entrée to talk about feelings (e.g. confidence, assertiveness, inner strength, fears), to practice social problem-solving, and to role-play communication skills for both shy children and those who are not, to foster classroom social interactions and to build friendships. Another message to consider talking about is that we have the power to change personal qualities or behaviors that make us unhappy (and that may change the way others perceive us).

THEMES: Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Team-Building

Zero

Katherine Otoshi (*Author, Illustrator*)
KO Kids Books: 2010

A sequel to the author's first book, One (listed above), this book again uses numbers and counting to tackle the broad theme of self esteem and addresses an important concept often missing in books on this topic: that self esteem building should not be simply "all about me and why I am special and unique" but should include the critical idea that "I am part of a community"! Zero is self conscious about her big round shape, and feels empty and worthless because all she sees a hole right in her center. Every day she watches the other numbers line up to count and thinks they have value, and she does not. She even tries to change her shape to become more like the other numbers. When Seven gives her some wise advice ("Every number has its value. Be open."), she realizes that she can't be something that she's not. Zero joins One to make Ten, and even bigger numbers, and now feels "right in her center." The other numbers take her cue and find they can make bigger numbers together (increasing their value and their happiness). With clever word play, this story invites discussions about accepting differences (especially body types), developing social skills, and finding value in yourself and in others. It emphasizes that we each have a special purpose, and fosters cooperation, team-building and community.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Feelings, Respecting Differences, Team-Building

"There is more treasure in books than in all the pirate's loot on Treasure Island."

Walt Disney (Animator, Producer, Screenwriter)

A Storm Called Katrina

Myron Uhlberg (*Author*), Colin Bootman (*Illustrator*)

Peachtree Publishers: 2011

Narrated by ten-year-old Louis Daniel as he and his family desperately search for dry ground in 2005 after Hurricane Katrina breaches New Orleans' levees. As the floodwaters rise, threatening their home, Louis grabs his beloved cornet (his idol is Louis Armstrong), but the family has no time to gather any other belongings. Using a scrap of someone's porch to buoy them, they make their way along with others through treacherous floodwaters, debris, snakes, and a lost dog they cannot rescue. Finally taking shelter in the crowded Superdome, Louis and his parents wait for days as first the electricity then the air conditioning go out, the bathrooms become unusable, food and water run out and people begin to fight. When his father leaves on a scouting mission within the Dome, the family becomes separated in the chaos, but Louis finds a clever way to find his father and offer comfort to others. Sometimes uncomfortable, this story provides a realistic look at the effects of the disaster, and concludes with author notes and several photographs. While many books about Hurricane Katrina focus on the rescue of displaced animals, this one examines the harsh realities of the disaster and subsequent homelessness of a single fictional family (who happen to be Black) from the eyes of their young son. While not recommended for younger Grade K-2 readers, students in Grades 3-5 will relate to this story—and will empathize with this family and the questions Louis faces. Unlike many popular portrayals of homelessness, which tend to be sentimental, unrealistic and romanticized (e.g. *Fly Away Home* and *December*, both by Eve Bunting), this one is realistic but developmentally appropriate. Use it as a mechanism to help students talk about the plight of the many "invisible people" who live in the margins all around them and to encourage empathy, acts of caring, charity and kindness to those in need, importance of family in times of crisis, the importance of hope.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Justice/Injustice, Social Responsibility

Abe Lincoln's Hat

Martha Brenner (*Author*), Donald Cook (*Illustrator*)

Random House Books for Young Readers (April 12, 1994)

Unlike many biographies about our sixteenth President, this one uses anecdotes to present a human and fallible Lincoln. Shown as a struggling, absent-minded and disorganized young lawyer who prevails through his use of humor, sensible ways and goodwill, the book begins with Lincoln shopping for a suit to reflect his new profession and choosing his signature stovepipe hat. He discovers that this accessory is a useful place to store reminders, courtroom notes, important papers, and even his checkbook—a habit revealed when a prank by two mischievous boys send the hat flying, and scattering its contents on a busy street. The book includes other anecdotes which (though source notes aren't provided) are part of Lincoln-lore: e.g. proving which man owned a horse by letting the colt loose to go to its mother (and her owner) as well as his calm but passionate defense of a slave's right to be granted freedom in the free-state of Illinois. This easy-reader (most appropriate with Grade 3 readers, or older reluctant readers in this age group) shows how calm responses, humor, inventiveness, and the ability to get along with others (even those who hold very different points of view), can help avoid conflicts and effectively obtain desired (positive) results. It goes without saying that Lincoln's actions and strong sense of justice and equality serve as a model of these values for young students—and can inspire them to stand up for what they believe in. The last page includes Civil War-era daguerreotypes of Lincoln-opponent Stephen Douglas and

several others mentioned in the text. Students will likely be interested to learn more about Lincoln. One hopeful fact to share is that, though he was called many cruel names (his appearance and quiet manner gave some the impression that he was unintelligent and incompetent), Lincoln went on to greatness. Older students might be interested in details about the many personal obstacles he overcame (e.g. his mother died when he was nine; though he is often described as brilliant, he was poor and self-taught; he suffered from life-long bouts of debilitating depression, insecurities and self doubt; he suffered adversity and many painful losses). Older students in this range might enjoy Russell Freedman's Lincoln (1987)

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Serving the Community, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems

And Tango Makes Three

Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell (*Authors*), Henry Cole (*Illustrator*)
Simon and Shuster Books for Young Readers: 2005

See complete annotation and additional resources in Grades K-2 section. With students in Grades 3-5, use the combination of suggested resources in tandem with this book to discuss the similarities and differences between the stories about the different penguin pairs; the need for companionship and caring relationships (and how they might be the same/different for animals); how the actions of the humans helped or hindered these unique relationships; how animals and humans develop social systems and relationships; social norms (for gender, cultural or ethnic groups); what “love” is (and different ways humans and animals express affection and caring); and why these stories might be considered controversial. Students can also review the original and subsequent news stories about these penguins and examine ways their relationships changed over time, how similar changes occur in human families, and how the facts are presented (to talk about issues such as sensationalism in the media and censorship).

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Systems

Autism Acceptance Book, The: Being A Friend to Someone With Autism

Ellen Sabin (*Author, Illustrator*)
Watering Can Press: 2006

This is an interactive workbook intended for students, rather than a piece of literature or teacher-resource. An easy read for students, it can be used either as a tool in a teacher-guided class meeting about autism, or used independently by individual or small groups of students. Each topical activity includes space for student comments. Targeted for children who do not have autism or autism spectrum disorders (ASD), it introduces them to the challenges faced by people who are “on the spectrum,” and supports the appreciation and respect for individual differences. It offers concrete information, conversation-starters, self-reflection, and engaging exercises. The activities (including imagery and journaling activities) are designed to help students develop empathy, understanding, compassion, and appreciation for people who are different from themselves. It also supports prosocial “upstander” behavior by giving students concrete strategies about how to be a good friend to others.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Team-Building

César, Si, Se Puede/Yes We Can!

Carmen T. Pernier-Grand (*Author*), David Diaz (*Illustrator*)

Two Lions: 2011

Few Latino Civil Rights heroes have inspired as many children's books as activist César Chavez. In a series of nineteen free verse poems (in Spanish and in English), this colorfully illustrated book celebrates Chavez's life, character, and values. Born in Arizona during the Great Depression into a family of hard working migrant workers, his early life was filled with back-breaking work and low pay. His mother felt education was the only way to break out of the cycle of poverty and hardship, and young Chavez attended over thirty schools as his family followed the crops, until (in defiance of his mother's wishes) he dropped out in eighth grade to help his family. A charismatic leader, he went on to found the National Farm Workers Association, an organization that fought for basic rights for migrant farm workers, and dedicated his life to helping to improve their lives by doing things by and for themselves—an inspirational message that students can apply to their own lives. A glossary and translation of the (Mexican) Spanish words used, a short biographical essay, and some famous quotes are included. Teachers may want to use this in conjunction with other materials about Chavez (such as Kathleen Krull's *Harvesting Hope*, 2003), farm worker conditions, and the United Farm Workers union. It offers an introduction to labor/human rights, immigrant issues, and the politics of how we get our food. Because Chavez left school at an early age, it is worth discussing the value of an education, whether students think Chavez's life would have been different in today's high-tech society, and how his life might have been different if he had stayed in school longer. This book can be used in Grades 6-8.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Feelings, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Serving the Community, Social Responsibility & Activism

Drita, My Homegirl

Jenny Lombard (*Author*)

Puffin: 2008

Narrated by two fourth-grade girls, one a Muslim Albanian refugee from war-torn Kosovo and the other a Black girl from Brooklyn, the chapters of this book alternate between their individual voices to tell the story of how these very different girls become friends. When ten-year-old Drita arrives in New York City with her mother, grandmother, and brother to reunite with Drita's father, the family hopes to make a new life in the US—where they dream of living a typical American life. Instead, they each struggle with isolation and difficulties communicating and assimilating. As her mother withdraws into clinical depression, Drita, unable to speak English, is scared and lonely. Her struggles to fit in at school and her new neighborhood are compounded when a popular Black girl named Maxie and her clique of fourth-graders ignore and make fun of Drita. Maxie has her own problems: she's suffered the death of her mother in a car accident and has had frequent discipline problems at school. Things begin to change for both girls when their teacher pairs them together for a class project. Though this story ends somewhat predictably with Maxie befriending Drita, it demonstrates for students the role knowledge has in helping to bridge cultural gaps, and emphasizes that students can control and change their behavior and attitudes towards others. Maxie's loving father and grandmother are models of compassion and support for Maxie, and also show how that kind of caring bond can be extended to others (including Drita's family). The examples of the ways the girls connect are touching and genuine. The link between bullying and war could be a bit more nuanced, but there are many possible themes to discuss, including: empathy, caring, courage, perseverance, social responsibility to others in need, hope and friendship, as well as war, human rights, displacement, the isolation felt by refugees who must leave everything behind, and the positive

impact that human connections and friendships have in coping with trauma. Woven throughout is information about the language and customs of Kosovo (Kosova). There are many obvious curriculum connections to social studies content: current events, power and privilege, immigration, and cultural identity. Though this book is about the friendship between two girls, use it to encourage conversations between both boys and girls about how they form friendships, what qualities they value in a friend, ways boys and girls view their friendships as similar and different, whether there are differences across cultures in friendship-making customs, etc. For more information about the Balkan war, older students (Grades 5-8) may want to read Nadja Halilbegovich's non-fiction book, My Childhood Under Fire: A Sarajevo Diary (2006).

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Global Citizenship, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems, Violence

Each Kindness

Jacqueline Woodsen (*Author*), E.B. Lewis (*Illustrator*)
Nancy Paulsen Books: 2012

When a new girl, Maya, enters school mid-winter wearing ragged clothes and sandals, she shyly sits next to Chloe and smiles tentatively at her. Chloe makes it clear that she has already made an (unfavorable) judgment about her new classmate by pointedly ignoring her, refusing to return the smile, and even physically moving her body farther away from Maya. In the ensuing months, Maya endures the taunts of the other children who actively exclude her, nickname her “Never New” because of her ragged second-hand clothes, and reject her persistent bids for friendship. One day, Maya stops coming to school. The teacher gives a lesson about how even small acts of kindness can change the world, telling students they are like pebbles tossed in water that send out ripples of kindness. A chastened Chloe realizes she has been unkind and vows that when Maya returns to school, she will return her smile and be kind to her. But it is too late: Maya never returns and Chloe’s opportunity is gone. Now she must find a way to live with her remorse (and hopefully, change her behavior for the future). Narrated by Chloe (who is around 9 years old), this book is evocative of Eleanor Estes The Hundred Dresses told with a more contemporary style and illustrations, and with a multiethnic classroom (Chloe is Black, Maya is White). The open ending acts as a great discussion starter about friendship, class and privilege, missed (or lost) opportunities to do the right thing or make amends, acceptance, and the ways that children often don’t realize until it’s too late how hurtful their behaviors (intentional or not) are towards others. It’s also a reminder for the majority of students who might not actively bully others, that their failure to be kind can be just as hurtful. Encourage students to make inferences about what might have happened to Maya, or to consider the outcome if Chloe and her classmates had been more accepting and responsive to Maya’s attempts to make friends. The illustrations can be used to practice reading facial expressions and social cues to build empathy and perspective-taking skills. This book can be used with children from all economic backgrounds who exclude those less fortunate than they are.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Responsibility

Eight Days: A Story of Haiti

Edwidge Danticat (*Author*), Alix Delinois (*Illustrator*)

Orchard Books: 2010

Focusing on one fictional child who survived the disastrous 2010 earthquake in Haiti, this story is narrated by a seven-year old boy named Junior as he recounts how he survived eight days of being trapped with his friend in the rubble of his collapsed home. When asked about his experience, he tells of missing his parents and shares the way his every-day memories and imagination gave him hope and the strength to survive. The illustrations of the visions that helped him survive show him flying kites and playing soccer with his friends, helping in his father's barbershop, racing on his bicycle with his sister, and singing a solo—and can encourage students to talk about the ways they cope with pain or personal difficulties. Both the author and illustrator are Haitian-born and the book incorporates some Haitian Creole words and captures the indomitable spirit of the Haitian people. The author's endnotes include information about the children of Haiti, her feelings when she learned of the earthquake, and her hopes and fears for her family still living there. This book can be used to spark interest in learning about Haitian culture and people (many of whom immigrated to the US), to relate to others who have suffered effects of a devastating event like a hurricane, and to talk about healing, survival, resilience, and hope.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Global Citizenship, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Responsibility & Activism, Team-Building

Every Living Thing

Cynthia Rylant (*Author*), S. D. Schindler (*Illustrator*)

Modern Curriculum Press: 1988

A complete annotation of this collection of short stories about the relationship between humans and animals appears in the Grade 6-8 section. Selected stories can be read aloud to students in Grades 3-5.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Responsibility

Families Change: A Book for Children Experiencing Termination of Parental Rights

Julie Nelson (*Author*)

Free Spirit Publishing: 2006

A complete annotation appears in the Grades K-2 section. This book is intended to help children in Grades K-5 who have already entered the foster care system, or who have been adopted, but who still remember their birth families.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Team-Building

Freedom Summer

Deborah Wiles (*Author*), Jerome Lagarrigue (*Illustrator*)

Aladdin: 2005

The full annotation of this book appears in Grade K-2 section above. Consider using this dense picture book with students in Grades 3-5 to address questions and issues more deeply.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Responsibility & Activism

Great Kapok Tree, The: A Tale of the Amazon Rainforest

Lynn Cherry (*Author, Illustrator*)

HMH Books for Young Readers: 2010

The complete annotation of this dense picture book appears in Grades K-2 section. This is a great “Earth Day” book that provides many obvious connections to science and social studies curricula at almost every grade level (e.g. rainforest canopy, camouflage, predators/prey, endangered species, ozone, erosion, habitats, conservation, ecology, pollution and recycling). It also provides many ways to open conversations about the lives of indigenous peoples, environmental stewardship, how each and every one of our actions has an impact that goes beyond us, and how we each have a responsibility to care for our planet. With students in Grades 3-5, consider tying it into the study of responding to urban development to avoid sprawl, or the political debate over economic growth versus preservation of natural resources, the depletion of the ozone layer, potential resources (like medications) from rainforests. Available in Spanish with co-author Alma Flor Ada (1994) (not reviewed).

THEMES: Communication, Global Citizenship, Justice/Injustice, Serving the Community, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems

Henry's Freedom Box: A True Story from the Underground Railroad

Ellen Levine (*Author*), Kadir Nelson (*Illustrator*)

Scholastic: 2007

Most primary grade students have heard the compelling stories of slaves escaping via the Underground Railroad. This one recounts the true story of a slave named Henry "Box" Brown who ingeniously (and perilously) mailed himself to freedom. Young Henry doesn't know how old he is (because slave's birth dates were not generally recorded). Though he dreams about one day being free, his mother reminds him that his (and his family's) position in the big house can quickly change without warning or reason. When his dying master gives Henry to his son rather than freeing him as expected, his heartbreaking separation from his family is captured in the illustrations. He is put to work in a tobacco warehouse—where his dreams of freedom slip farther and farther away. Henry grows to a man, marries a woman from another plantation, and has several children. Though Henry pays money to his wife's master to have the privilege of being married (and ostensibly keep his family together), his wife's master sells Henry's wife and children at the slave market—devastated, Henry never sees them again. In 1849, with the help of an abolitionist doctor, he is shipped by crate from Richmond, VA, to Philadelphia. Students get some inkling of what Henry experienced through the illustrations of him being roughly handled in his cramped quarters (a 2x2x3' box). After an arduous overland journey, Henry was finally “free.” Though we never learn about

Henry's life as a free man (he became a speaker for the Abolitionists but was forced to flee to England in 1850 with the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act) or whether he is reunited with his family (no records show that he did), the author's final notes answer some questions about details of Henry's journey (which took a remarkable twenty-seven hours, and at times he was upside-down). The sparse writing and some inconsistencies in available facts may not satisfy more inquisitive readers, but the illustrations will appeal to third grade students as well as reluctant readers within this age group. This book offers an opportunity to talk about justice, freedom, risk-taking and courage, despair, grief and loss, desperation and resilience, courage and determination. Pair this with Andrea Davis Pinkney's Sojourner Truth's Step-Stomp Stride (2009), included above in the K-2 section, to explore concepts of privilege, prejudice, racism, human rights, injustice, and justice and to learn about places where slavery still exists and how it affects all of us.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Global Citizenship, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems, Violence

Hip Hop Speaks to Children: A Celebration of Poetry with a Beat

Nikki Giovanni (*Author*), Michele Noiset, Jeremy Tugeau, Kristen Balouch, Damian Ward & Alicia Vergel de Dios (*Illustrators*)

Sourcebooks Jabberwocky: 2008

Strictly speaking this is an anthology of songs (on CD) accompanied by written lyrics in poem and verse form—highlighting the use of rhythm and vernacular in hip-hop, rap, gospel, “hambone”, jazz, R&B, and Black poetry. There are fifty-one pieces, including a passage from Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech. Artists range from Langston Hughes and W. E. B. DuBois to Kanye West, Mos Def, and Eloise Greenfield to Queen Latifah. Selections focus primarily on positive themes such as hope, self-esteem, respect for the past, and determination to make a better future. The accompanying CD includes performances by the artists. This volume is much denser than it first appears (and may be useful with students through Grades 6-8) and will provide a lot of material for classroom use. Appended notes tell more about the contributors.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings

Hot Issues Cool Choices: Facing Bullies, Peer Pressure, Popularity and Put Downs

Sarah McLeod Humphrey (*Author*), Brian Strassburg (*Illustrator*)

Prometheus: 2007

This collection of vignettes can be selected by adults or students to use as thought-provoking discussion starters or role-play scenarios for class meetings. Each vignette poses a “what would you do” ethical dilemma, running the gamut from teasing and taunting, exclusion, rejection, peer pressure, thinking about personal principles (like honesty), etc. Because there are no “right” answers, these scenarios will prompt lively debate among students and will encourage perspective-taking, problem-solving and empathy-building; and develop critical thinking, honesty, fairness and compassion. Use with other books in this series by this same author, including It's Up to You: What Do You Do (1998), reviewed in the 2009 Companion Bibliography.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Team-Building

How to Build Your Own Country

Valerie Wyatt (*Author*), Fred Rix (*Illustrator*)

Kids Can Press: 2009

This creative book provides students with an interactive experience that makes them think about what's involved in creating their own country "from scratch." Offering ideas and step-by-step advice, students are encouraged to create everything from a flag and currency, to establishing laws, an economy and leading a government. Examples of events that have shaped countries throughout history, facts about government, elections, geography and global issues are included, along with examples of actual micro-nations. Rather than a literature offering, this is a good resource for a class social studies project promoting learning about other nations and can help students begin to make sense of current events, political issues, civil unrest and struggles around the globe. Students will also learn that (in spite of claims made in the book that imply "anyone can do it"), while nation-building starts with inspiration, it takes hard work, communication, commitment, cooperation, compromise, perseverance, and getting along with your neighbors to be successful! With older students extend this with research about emerging nations, [United Nations Youth Delegations](#), and aide groups like [UNICEF](#), [The Heifer Project](#), [The Malala Fund](#), [Room to Read](#), and others to explore world problems such as poverty, global warming, human rights violations, child labor, national security and international aid. This book is part of the CitizenKid collection.

THEMES: Communication, Global Citizenship, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems, Team-Building

I Am Jack

Susanne Gervay (*Author*), Cathy Wilcox (*Illustrator*)

Tricycle Press: 2009

This illustrated, easy chapter book follows eleven-year-old Jack, who has multiple interests and hobbies (including photography and handball) as his life changes from good to awful as a result of relentless bullying and exclusion. Classmate George Hamel knows just how to push Jack's buttons—including making cruel comments about his mother and the reason his dad left them. Jack counters by making a joke about George—and things rapidly escalate with George calling Jack "Butt Head." Before long, everyone picks up on the epithet and Jack soon becomes ostracized because other students are too afraid to step in or stay friends with him anymore. Unwilling to talk to his mom, the problems become too big for him to handle on his own and his grades and participation start to slip. Jack needs help, and fortunately his neighbor Anna steps in and alerts the school (which responds with an anti-bullying program and support for Jack that allow him to gradually regain his place among his peers). Written by an Australian, students will notice slight differences in expressions and vocabulary. Caveats for using this book include: "big" George is painted as a stereotypic bully and ultimately someone to be pitied; Jack's mom is both too preoccupied with her job and her boyfriend, and too detached to notice her son is in trouble; and the school's rapid and attentive response and success (after apparently ignoring the problem) seem too-good-to-be-true. That said, all three issues can be addressed as discussion-points with students. This thoughtful book deals with the notion of the contagious nature of bullying and negative school climate. Though the primary theme is about out-of-control name calling and bullying, it also takes on shifting family structures (separation/desertion) and financial struggles, and explores the importance and substance of friendship, the importance of standing up and doing the right thing (i.e. being a proactive bystander).

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Peer Relationships

I Can Hear the Sun

Patricia Polacco (*Author, Illustrator*)

Puffin: 1999

The story unfolds in a park where a sad and lonely homeless boy, Fondo, befriends a blind goose, two homeless adults and the park keeper, Stephanie Michele, who generously cares for them all. Stephanie takes care of the geese that live on the shore of Lake Merritt, and when Fondo shows up one day, she lets him help. A compassionate caregiver to Fondo, the geese, and the “Throwaway People”, Stephanie chooses not to focus on the external flaws that many might notice (e.g., blindness, homelessness, abandonment) and finds the inner strengths and beauty in each individual person or animal. She also encourages Fondo to dream—as a way to cope with his family and educational difficulties. As it comes time for the geese to fly south for the winter, Fondo tells Stephanie that they’ve invited him to join them and insists that he will fly away with them. Near the end of the story, when social workers come for Fondo, he flies away, led by the blind goose. Or does he really? The apparently magical ending leaves room for students to consider what really happened to Fondo (whether the ending is a metaphor). They can be encouraged to write an “after story”—especially in light of the fact that this book is based on a compilation of real characters from the author’s life. Rather than focus on the magical implications, use this story to encourage students to consider alternative perspectives (e.g. as a metaphor for ways we all try to escape from harsh realities, even if it’s in our imagination, to dream of a better life). Or, perhaps the magic is that Fondo finds his place in life caring for creatures, as Stephanie does. Students who have learning or behavioral problems, are homeless, or otherwise feel that they don’t “fit in” will relate to Fondo’s wish to simply “fly away.” All children can benefit from a healthy imagination and the ability to dream. Use this story to help students consider ways they can dream of alternative futures for themselves, or to brainstorm ways they can help others realize their dreams, offer compassion, and to teach about stereotyping and bias, hope, fitting in, finding your place, and friendship.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Peer Relationships, social Responsibility & Activism

If the World Were a Village

David Smith (*Author*), Shelagh Armstrong (*Illustrator*)

Kids Can Press: 2011 (Revised)

This picture book scales down world’s population of nearly seven billion people to a village of 100 people. It offers visual representation of many statistics about population, resources, and distribution of wealth in a picture-book format. Though didactic and lacking in background stories, it is an interesting concept that can be integrated into Math or Social Studies curricula in Grades 3-5 to provoke discussions about access to basic human needs (food, water, sanitation, housing, health care and education), availability of technology, human rights, social privilege, and violence. It is recommended that teachers extend the discussion to talk about the implications these statistics have on the lives of those who are marginalized and have so little—along with the social responsibility of those of us who have more to make a difference. For students in homogeneous school settings where they are not likely to have first-hand experiences with people from diverse cultures, they might use the statistics to create their own stories—to bring individual villagers to life. This revised edition is updated with new content and insights about the world’s people, several new activities, new material on food security, energy and health. Part of the CitizenKid series.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Gender Issues, Global Citizenship, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems

Immigrant Kids

Russell Freedman (*Author*)

Scott Foresman: 1995

At the turn of the twentieth century, coming to America meant freedom and prosperity to the flood of immigrants arriving in the US from around the world. They faced realities quite different from their dreams: overcrowded, dirty cities; unemployment; poverty and disease. Many struggled with discrimination as they tried to assimilate into a new culture, and still retain their cultural identities. Children often had to forgo education to help support their families through menial jobs or laboring in sweatshops. Period photographs of children paired with their personal stories offer insight into the experience of being a newcomer to America between 1800-1900. With children as the focus, each chapter looks at specific aspects of their lives, work, play, and school, complete with quotations. While the photos are captivating and the reading not too difficult for most primary grade students, some vocabulary of the era will be unfamiliar. This non-fiction book introduces the topic of immigration, how it has changed over time, and provides historical background about the people and cultures that helped form our nation. Use it to discuss ethnic rivalries, biases, and stereotypes (past and present) with students through Grade 8, in conjunction with social studies curricula.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Global Citizenship, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Activism, Social Systems

In Our Mother's House

Patricia Polacco (*Author, Illustrator*)

Philomel: 2009

In this dense picture, a young Black girl, the eldest of three adoptive children, describes how her two Caucasian mothers, Marmee and Meema, adopted her, her Asian brother, and her red-headed sister. She reminisces about her happy childhood in Berkeley, CA with their large extended family and friends. The family is depicted as loving, joyful and typical. When one bigoted neighbor calls them names and attempts to exclude the family, the two mothers model grace under fire and teach their children that different doesn't mean wrong: "She's afraid of what she cannot understand: she doesn't understand us." This book emphasizes that love makes a family, even if it's not a traditional one. While a bit idealized, it depicts a lesbian couple in a non-judgmental way and shows how important it is for every family to be part of a supportive inclusive community. It sets a positive tone for children with same-sex parents, as well for those who may have questions about a "different" family in their neighborhood. Teachers who feel squeamish about introducing a book about LGBTQ families may find support in a 2007 [Pew research study](http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2007/05/23/four-in-ten-americans-have-close-friends-or-relatives-who-are-gay)^x that found four out of every ten Americans had family members or close friends who were gay (that number is likely to be greater now, seven years later). Students in all families have a right to feel welcomed at school, and educators have a responsibility to protect them from bullying (which LGBTQ families are more likely to be subjected to). Pair this with other books portraying family diversity and go beyond LGBTQ issues to talk about what it means to be a friend/good neighbor, gender role stereotypes (appearances), and to talk about ways to make all families feel welcome and accepted at school.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Systems

x <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2007/05/23/four-in-ten-americans-have-close-friends-or-relatives-who-are-gay>

Nelson Mandela

Kadir Nelson (*Author, Illustrator*)

Katherine Tegen Books: 2013

A complete annotation of this picture-book biography about Nelson Mandela appears in the Grade K-2 section. The simple story is supplemented with a more detailed author's note that retells the story of Mandela's life from childhood through the award of the Nobel Peace Prize; decide whether this version would be more interesting or appropriate for your students. Mandela's story can be meaningful for any student who struggles with bias, poverty, and injustice in their own lives, and can be used to help them redirect their anger. The text covers many of the hardships Mandela endured (including his lengthy imprisonment), but does not include details about either the political divisions within the anti-apartheid movement, the injustices that still exist in the country, or Mandela's estrangement from his daughters. These aspects of his persona add depth and complexity to the man, and older students in this age group may find them interesting (and the details may make him seem more accessible to them).

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Global Citizenship, Human Rights, Justice/ Injustice, Peer Relationships, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems, Team Building, Violence

Old Turtle and the Broken Truth

Douglas Wood (*Author*), Jon J. Muth (*Illustrator*)

Scholastic Press: 2003

This fable is reminiscent of Native American folk tales. The people of Earth are living in peace until they discover a powerful message that will change the way they view each other. Truth had fallen from the stars, breaking in half: "One of the pieces blazed off through the night sky, and the other fell to earth in the beautiful land." Crow, Fox, Coyote, and Raccoon, each pick up the fallen piece but discard it because it is rough and incomplete. But when a human being finds the piece, and sees the words "You Are Loved" written on it, he shares it with people "whose faces look like his." Cherished as their most important possession, the people who hold this Great Truth are given power and happiness. Over time, jealousy, fear, anger and war erupt because the people will not share their gift with those who are different from them—and that results in suffering for the earth and all its creatures. One day, a brave Little Girl seeks the wisdom of the ancient Old Turtle, who advocates listening to the "language of breezes...learning lessons from stones and animals and trees and stars." He sees that the people's Truth is not a whole truth, but broken, and shows the girl the missing part of the Truth. The Little Girl returns with it to her people and when the pieces are brought together, they see the whole message: YOU ARE LOVED...AND SO ARE THEY. When they share the message, people and earth are healed. This book inspires hope and instills the value of reaching out to, accepting and welcoming others who are different from us. It can also be used to promote environmental stewardship, and to consider why wars occur (particularly with children whose families have been affected directly by it as combatants or victims). While this book was written for younger children (who can appreciate the simple story), students in Grades 3-5 are more likely to understand the symbolism of the fable and to tackle its more layered meaning and themes.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Human Rights, Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Responsibility, Violence

One Hen: How One Small Loan Made a Big Difference

Katie Smith Milway (*Author*), Eugenie Fernandes (*Illustrator*)

Kids Can Press, Ltd.: 2008

This dense picture book follows a young Ghanaian village boy named Kojo. The death of his father forces him to leave school to help his mother care for their family, and there is little money or food. When their fellow Ashanti villagers give them a small loan, Kojo asks his mother for some of the money to buy a single hen. Clever and hard-working, he uses profits from sales of eggs to help feed his family and build his flock; a year later, he has twenty five hens and uses some of his earnings to return to school. But the story doesn't end there. Over time, Kojo's farm grows to 1000 hens, to become the largest in the region—helping to provide a livelihood for many families. While the writing (like other books in the Citizen Kid series) is a bit pedantic and leaves out some important details, this book can launch a combined Social Studies/Math unit about West Africa, its culture, economy and people; including concepts like micro-loans and “keeping tallies” as Kojo does. Explore ideas like: how a little kindness and support can make a big difference in someone's life; that success is linked to hard work, perseverance, and persistence to reach a goal; and education leads to success. Use this book to inspire students to get involved and become informed global citizens; explore concepts like social responsibility, how community support for individuals leads to improved welfare of the whole, and ethical treatment of animals (e.g. large poultry farms). A capsule biography of Kwabena Darko (whose life inspired this story) includes information about an organization he founded to give small loans to people who cannot get one from a bank. A glossary, an explanation of micro-financing, and a list of relevant organizations for children to explore (including some for people here in the US) are also provided. Researching aid organizations like [Heifer International](#) in conjunction with reading this book would be useful.

THEMES: Communication, Feelings, Global Citizenship, Human Rights, Peer Relationships, Serving the Community, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems, Team-Building

One of Us

Peggy Moss (*Author*), Penny Weber (*Illustrator*)

Tilbury House Publishers: 2010

A familiar theme about being the new student in a school takes on a different slant in this picture book: popular Carmen tells new-girl Roberta James “You are one of us.” But Roberta soon learns about the complexities of trying to find her place in the social hierarchy of her new school. In her quest to find peers who share her interests, she moves from group to group and while she is readily accepted (at first), she soon finds herself rejected and excluded for one reason or another. In her efforts to just be herself, Roberta soon feels she doesn't fit in anywhere. She resists peer pressure to relinquish things she likes, she is conflicted about what that means until she finds a group of students who accept her as she is, declaring she is perfect because she is different from everyone else in the group. Now that she has found her niche with other diverse individuals, she is accepted. The illustrations of the facial expressions add depth to the story, and any student who's ever felt awkward trying to find a place to sit at lunch, or looked for someone to hang out with at recess will relate to this story. While a bit didactic, this picture book will appeal to Grades 2-3 (to examine feelings, friendship, and exclusion) and in Grade 4-5, to explore individuality, diversity, peer pressure, cliques, conformity, venturing to try new interests or cross group lines, accepting others despite apparent differences, balancing the need to fit in with the importance of being oneself.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Team-Building

Our Gracie Aunt

Jacqueline Woodsen (*Author*), Jon J. Muth (*Illustrator*)
Hyperion Book: 2002

This dense picture book tackles the difficult topic of two young children sent to live with an aunt they don't know after being deserted by their parents. Johnson and his older sister, Beebee, seem to be all alone in the world. Their mother has left them many times before, but this time they sense she won't be coming back. When a social worker comes to take them to stay with an aunt they've never met (their mother's estranged sister), the stunned and wary children wonder where she's been all this time—and why she would want to take care of them now. The two siblings gradually begin to trust their Aunt Gracie. After a visit with their hospitalized mother, who assures them that Grace will care for them until she is able to, the two return to Gracie's open arms and move from a sense of isolation to a sense of belonging and understanding of what it means to be a family. The book ends with the tenuous hope that their mother will eventually be able to take care of them again. The siblings' different reactions provide an opportunity to encourage discussion about different perspectives and feelings about the same events. Use this with [Families Change](#) (in the Grade K-2 section) with children who have formally been placed in foster care while a parent is hospitalized. Though the reader is not given the reason for the mother's hospitalization, this book could be used with children whose parents are mentally ill, in drug rehabilitation facilities, or to build empathy among their classmates.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Social Systems

Owen and Mzee: The True Story of a Remarkable Friendship

Isabella and Craig Hatkoff and Dr. Paula Kahumba (*Authors*), Peter Greste (Photographer)
Scholastic: 2006

A complete annotation appears in the K-2 section. Other versions of this story by the same authors include [Owen and Mzee: Language of Friendship](#) (2007); both will appeal to students through Grade 5. With students in Grades 3-5, consider pairing this with Jennifer Holland's [Unlikely Friendships: 47 Remarkable Stories from the Animal Kingdom](#) (2010) or [Tsunami: Helping Each Other](#) (2005) by Ann Morris and Heidi Larson (a snapshot of a human family's loss and recovery during the same tsunami). Since one of the authors is also a child, it would be really interesting for students to consider how her interest and persistence helped bring this story to light—and consider ways they can take steps to make their own hopes and dreams come true.

THEMES: Communication, Feelings, Global Citizenship, Relationships, Social Responsibility & Activism

Rosa

Nikki Giovanni (*Author*), Bryan Collier (*Illustrator*)
Square Fish: 2007

While there is no shortage of books about Rosa Parks' quiet defiance on a Montgomery, AL bus in 1955, this one offers a unique and more accurate perspective of the actual events of that day and links her personal story to a summary of the Civil Rights Movement. The story of that famous day is much more complex (and interesting) than commonly portrayed, and introduces students to the idea of civil disobedience. A respected seamstress, caring for an aged mother, and married to a successful barber,

Rosa Parks was an active member of the NAACP, and her refusal to move from her seat was more calculated than the myth that she was simply “too tired” to get up. When told to relinquish her bus seat for a White passenger, she actively defied the Jim Crow rules and literally went on a sit down strike. Her daring and courageous act of civil disobedience and subsequent arrest played a key role in sparking the Montgomery Bus Strike of 1955-56. Since this author knew Ms. Parks personally, it seems probable that some of the personal inferences were drawn from actual conversations. The central message is about standing up for what you believe through a combination of personal strength and courage. There are many lessons here—including that when we show our own courage we can empower others to do the same. Link this to social studies curricula and vocabulary related to the Civil Rights movement.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Feelings, Gender Issues, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems, Violence

Saltpie: A Choctaw Journey from Darkness into Light

Tim Tingle (*Author*), Karen Clarkson (*Illustrator*)

Cinco Puntos Press: 2010

This family history spanning fifty years is told by a renowned Choctaw storyteller, and illustrated by a Choctaw artist. The author relates his family’s journey from their origins in Oklahoma Choctaw country to a new home in Pasadena, TX and is a tender homage to his beloved Mawmaw (grandmother). It wasn't until the author was six that he learned that his grandmother was blind—dating back to the time she was a new arrival in Texas, and someone threw a stone at her in a racially motivated act. When the author was in college, Mawmaw finally received eye-transplant surgery in an effort to restore her vision. As the family kept vigil at the hospital, they shared stories about their past, including revelations about the elder woman’s days as an orphan at an Indian boarding school, and the discrimination she encountered living in Texas. The surgery was successful: Mawmaw can see. Family photos and details about relatives add depth and a personal touch to this story of endurance across generations and their efforts to honor the past, while struggling to assimilate in mainstream America. The title comes from a word invented by Tingle’s father to describe any sort of pain or distress. A lengthy afterword provides more details about Tingle’s family and Choctaw culture, and offers much to think about regarding Native American stereotypes—including the author’s advice to adults about “How much can we tell them?” (a reference to educating students about the truths regarding the injustices Native peoples have suffered and the assaults against their heritage, cultures, traditions, languages, spiritual beliefs, and rights).

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems, Violence

Sélavi

Youme Landowne (*Author, Illustrator*)

Cinco Puntos Press: 2005

Based on the true stories of homeless children in Haiti, *Sélavi* (“that is life”), opens with: “Not so long ago and not so far away, people with guns could take a family, burn a house and disappear, leaving a small child alone in the world.” The book tells the story of one of those children, a young boy who finds himself homeless on the streets of Haiti’s capital, Port-au-Prince. Sélavi finds other street children who share their food and a place to sleep until repressive authorities force them to seek protection at a church. Even the

orphanage set up to help them proves unsafe and their new home is burned down. Despite all the difficulties, the children continue to speak out about their needs, eventually establishing a radio station in a rebuilt orphanage. Together they proclaim a message of hope through murals and radio programs. The book deals with complex issues and captures the feelings of fear, anger, and solidarity that bind the orphaned children. This is a realistic view that is alternately disturbing and hopeful; it gives American students a glimpse into the lives, culture, in Haiti, and plumbs themes such as poverty, homelessness, human rights issues, civil war, and social justice. Photographs of Haitian children working and playing together, endnotes from the author, and personal remembrances of fellow Haitian-American author Edwidge Danticat provide background information that will help older students gain an understanding of Haitian history. Compare this with Edwidge Danticat's *Eight Days: A Story of Haiti* (2010)

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Global Citizenship, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems, Violence

She Loved Baseball: The Effa Manley Story

Audrey Vernick (*Author*), Don Tate (*Illustrator*)
Balzer + Bray: 2010

Effa Manley loved baseball—and her story is unique: She was the first and only woman ever inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, PA though she was not a baseball player herself (she co-owned and managed the influential Newark Eagles, a Negro League team). A devoted fan of the Yankees and Babe Ruth, she eventually moved from her native Philadelphia to Harlem where she met her husband Abe (at Yankee Stadium). She became an early advocate for Civil Rights when she organized the Citizen's League for Fair Play, which urged boycotts of businesses that did not hire Black workers—pressuring Harlem's largest department store to hire Black salesclerks. In 1935, Effa and Abe started the Newark Eagles, part of the new Negro National League. Effa handled the team's business and attended league meetings, despite complaints from other owners that baseball was no place for a woman. The Negro League eventually disbanded once Jackie Robinson became accepted as part of the formerly all-White major leagues, and top Black players soon followed. But Effa's efforts on behalf of her players didn't end: she called attention to the league's unfair practice of not reimbursing the Negro Leagues for players who joined them (and establish a precedent to pay for all players). Fearing “her” players would be forgotten, she also petitioned the National Baseball Hall of Fame to induct qualified Negro League players; her efforts led to nine players being inducted between 1971 and 1977, but she continued to advocate until her death in 1981. In 2006, Effa Manley was also inducted at Cooperstown, in recognition for her civil rights work and to tireless efforts to advocate for Black players to be treated with respect. This dense picture book will appeal to Grade 3-5 students (especially baseball fans) and touches on women's roles and rights, and the early Civil Rights movement. Effa Manley was unique in that she not only fought racial injustice, but she succeeded in a male-dominated field. Her personal experiences growing up as a fair-skinned Biracial child can be used to highlight discrimination against mixed-race individuals' and their struggle to find where they “fit in.” A [teacher's guide](#)^{xi} includes biographical information on both author and illustrator, as well as activities geared towards Grade 3-5 students. Use this book with *Teammates* (about Jackie Robinson), or with Kadir Nelson's history of the Negro Leagues, *We Are the Ship* (2008)

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems, Team Building

xi <http://www.audreyvernick.com/SheLovedBaseballGuide.pdf>

Snake and Lizard

Joy Crowley (*Author*), Gavin Bishop (*Illustrator*)
Kane/Miller Books: 2008

This short chapter book (each chapter is its own short story) follows two unlikely, but inseparable friends: elegant, calm (and self-absorbed) Snake, and exuberant Lizard (who tends to be frenetic and dramatic). The two embark on a variety of exploits which result in predictable antics, quarrels, bickering and competition. Ultimately, the duo finds a way to work together and maintain their friendship, in spite of their differences (not to mention the fact that they are natural predators/prey). This often humorous book deals with the inevitable ebb and flow of friendships, bad moods, the fact that friends can have different temperaments and likes, and sometimes need space apart; it reinforces the importance of sharing, cooperation, and compromise. One refreshing aspect is that Snake is a girl, and Lizard, a boy, so stereotypes are avoided thanks to their true-to-life animal instincts. This is a good change of pace from Arnold Lobel's Frog and Toad books—and may appeal to a broader range of students.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences

Soft Rain: A Story of the Cherokee Trail of Tears

Cornelia Cornelissen (*Author*)
Yearling: 1999

Nine-year-old Soft Rain's teacher reads a letter to her class stating that all Cherokee people must leave their land in North Carolina by May 23, 1838, and move west—to a land that the Cherokee people refer to as "the land of darkness." Soft Rain believes her family will not be affected, but she and her mother are forced by soldiers to leave the girl's blind grandmother, dog, father and brother (who are out working in their fields). As they begin the notorious walk known as the Trail of Tears, some 18,000 Tsalagi people endure sickness and hardship as they are marched across rivers and mountains from stockade to stockade, losing 4000 to illness, exhaustion and starvation alone. Soft Rain's courage and hope are somewhat restored when she is reunited with her family along the way—her father now a leader on the Trail. While the author makes clear the hardships these Native Americans endured and the injustice of their exile, Soft Rain's positive attitude and her relative lack of affect may require teachers to ask students pointed questions to make sure they understand the impact that this betrayal had (and continues to have) on our Native peoples. The grandmother's story is a good opportunity to talk about the long lasting effects these actions have had on the culture. A map and additional reading are provided, but (written in the 1990's) this information should be supplemented by more recent information and research into Native cultures then and now. Resources such as the [History Channel](http://www.history.com/topics/native-american-history/trail-of-tears)^{xii} and the official [Cherokee Nation](http://www.cherokee.org/AboutTheNation/History/Facts.aspx)^{xiii} websites can provide useful historical and cultural background information.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Respecting Differences, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems, Violence

xii <http://www.history.com/topics/native-american-history/trail-of-tears>

xiii <http://www.cherokee.org/AboutTheNation/History/Facts.aspx>

Something Beautiful

Sharon Dennis Wyeth (*Author, Illustrator*)

Dragonfly Books: 2002

An unnamed little girl longs to see beyond the litter, broken windows, scary graffiti, homeless people, and the angry scribbling in the halls of her battered apartment building. When her teacher writes the word *beautiful* on the blackboard and instructs students to find something beautiful around them, the girl begins an odyssey around her neighborhood. Her neighbors each share their own thoughts about beauty (from a fried fish sandwich, an apple, or a perfectly smooth stone) and she learns that beauty is both in the eye of the beholder, and makes you feel happy when you find it. She decides to erase some graffiti in an effort to make her home more beautiful, and the book ends on a hopeful note and a lesson about the beauty of friendships. Inspired by the author's own memories of growing up poor, this book teaches children to get involved as a first step to making small changes in their world and encourages them to bring beauty into their lives. (It's also important to point out the role of caring adults, including teachers, to foster that process). For those students who come from relatively privileged backgrounds, this book can be used in several ways to develop compassion and caring: to help students think about ways they can learn about those around them who are less privileged; to consider ways they can make a positive difference in their own communities; to partner with a "sister" school in a different community to develop a collaborative community service project; to learn more about people/communities as a way to develop or evaluate how a service project might work (i.e., not just to impose their own notions of beauty or improvement on others, but learning about their perspectives).

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Serving the Community, Social Responsibility & Activism

Ten Amazing People and How They Changed the World

Maura D. Shaw (*Author*), Stephen Marchesi (*Illustrator*)

SkyLight Paths: 2002

A forward by educator Robert Coles sets the tone for this collection of biographical sketches about a diverse group of spiritual leaders whose beliefs and passion have influenced human rights and helped create a better world. This dense picture book highlights men (and two women) from around the world: from the Civil War era (Black Elk) to the present day (Mother Theresa, Desmond Tutu, Dorothy Day and Thich Naht Hahn). One common trait was that each believed that they had the power to make a difference by helping others, promoting peace, protecting the environment, fighting for racial equality, and serving the disadvantaged. The text includes a brief biography emphasizing each individual's moral beliefs and accomplishments, a chronology that puts their lives in context with world events, a famous quote, definitions of relevant terms for each individual, and a "fascinating fact" about each. Inspirational stories about real people may provide role models that help students who experience similar obstacles or life-challenges to identify positive goals and create their own "roadmaps" for success. This useful resource text can offer a starting point to encourage students to identify others (most notably, women of all races) and to learn and writing about individuals who inspire them.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Global Citizenship, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Serving the Community, Social Responsibility & Activism

This Child, Every Child: A Book About the World's Children

David J Smith (*Author*), Shelagh Armstrong (*Illustrator*)

Kids Can Press: 2011

Every second, four more children are added to the world's population of over 2.2 billion children--some will have homes, be cared for and have enough to eat, but many others will not. This book of statistics and stories, written by a former geography teacher, is based on the "United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child" (a [child-friendly PDF version](#)^{xiv} is available online through UNICEF) and compares the lives of different children around the world today (including in the US). Appropriate for students in Grades 4-8, this book will take students beyond their own lives and experiences to see the world through the eyes of children around the world. Included are ideas for projects along with website references and print resources that encourage students' involvement in making changes.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Gender Issues, Global Citizenship, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Respecting Differences, Serving the Community, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems, Team-Building, Violence

This is the Rope: Stories from the Great Migration

Jacqueline Woodsen (*Author*), James Ransome (*Illustrator*)

Nancy Paulsen Books: 2013

This story takes place during the so-called Great Migration of the mid-twentieth century, when over six-million Black families relocated from the South, seeking change and better opportunities in other parts of the US. It follows three generations of one particular family as they move north from South Carolina to Brooklyn. Throughout, a simple rope (first a jump rope, then a clothesline, and a luggage tie), plays a role in the family's history as family moves forward, while still maintaining and honoring family traditions. The little girl grows to become a grandmother and reflects back on the family's changes. An author's note offers a brief familial history as well as a note about the Great Migration. Though this is a simple picture book (written for Grades 1-3), younger children may have difficulty following the multi-generational story. Students in Grades 3-5 will get an introduction to this period in US history and will also be more likely to understand the symbolism that the rope represents. Use this to expand on themes of families, change, ties and traditions across generations.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Systems

Unlikely Friendships: 47 Remarkable Stories from the Animal Kingdom

Jennifer Holland (*Author, Illustrator*)

Workman Publishing Company: 2010

The first in this series written by National Geographic's Jennifer Holland, this nonfiction chapter book uses short (4-10 page) essays paired with candid photographs to document touching tales of inter-species friendships between animals. Though they have nothing in common (in fact, most are natural enemies), both domesticated and wild animals are shown to have formed close caring bonds with each other: a dog

xiv www.unicef.org/rightsite/files/uncrcchildfriendlylanguage.pdf

and a cat, a cat and a bird, a mare and a fawn, a snake and a hamster, and a leopard and a calf, to name a few. The details of each, and the author's insights into how or why these remarkable relationships came about, offer insights about the animal kingdom and potential lessons for humans (e.g. be open-minded and never make assumptions based on appearance). There are several books in this series; this one happens to have to most material and would be a hit with Grades 3-5. One notable aspect of these stories is that most are about animals that became friends by their own choice (not as a result of human intervention, e.g. rescued animal babies) and maintained their connections even when offered the chance to move on. Use this as a read aloud if you want to screen out stories that might be too graphic or disturbing for students (e.g. a baby Oryx adopted by a lioness is killed by another lion when the baby wanders off from its weak and starving adoptive mother; a donkey attacks a dog who attacks an adopted lamb). Use selected stories to discuss natural instincts, death (as a natural part of the circle of life), actual loss, and grief. This book challenges the notion of "survival of the fittest" (natural selection) with an alternate view that survival also depends on qualities such as cooperation—a worthy theme for 3-5th graders. There are many links to concepts such as bias and accepting differences as well as traits such as friendship, compassion, devotion, and bravery of animals. Extrapolate on these themes to encourage students to consider the value of these qualities in themselves and others, and their role and responsibilities to help others whenever possible.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Social Responsibility, Social Systems

We Are the Ship

Kadir Nelson (*Author, Illustrator*)
Hyperion/Jump At The Sun: 2008

The title of this beautifully illustrated history of baseball's Negro Leagues comes from a quote by its founder, Rube Foster: "We are the ship; all else the sea" as he brought together owners of other Black baseball teams, to form the Negro National League in 1920. The narrative is told through the voice of an unidentified player reflecting back, and is cleverly divided into nine innings, beginning with the formation of the League, and ending with the integration of Black players into the Majors. It follows the history of the League, its teams and players from its early days until it was disbanded mid-century (when Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier for Black players to join the all-White major league teams). Of course it reflects the experiences of countless virtually anonymous players as they faced segregation, discrimination and hatred, terrible working conditions and abysmally low pay. But it also focuses on their determination to do what they loved, and the sportsmanship required to make their teams successful. This book can be used with students in Grades 3-8 to talk about how the history of the League echoed the social and political struggles of all Black Americans during this era, including issues such as segregation, discrimination, and working conditions. It can also be used to highlight positive aspects of determination, ambition, sportsmanship, perseverance and dedication. Rube Foster's quote can be used as the basis for student writing about taking a leadership role in creating positive change.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems, Team Building

Wilma Unlimited: How Wilma Rudolph Became the World's Fastest Woman

Katherine Krull (*Author*), David Diaz (*Illustrator*)

HMH Books for Young Readers: 2000

Born in 1940 in Tennessee to a family of twenty-one people, Wilma Rudolph started life as a tiny, frail and sickly preemie; by age five, polio had paralyzed her left leg. Everyone said she would never walk again, but Wilma was determined not just to walk again, but to run. Through sheer perseverance, by age twelve, she was able to walk without her steel leg brace. In high school, Wilma helped lead her high school basketball team to the state championship, and (though they lost) Wilma caught the eye of the Tennessee State University track coach who helped her enroll and become the first in her family to attend and finish college. At age twenty, she represented the US in the 1960 Olympics in Rome, where, despite a twisted ankle, she became the first American woman to win three gold medals during a single Olympic competition. In spite of being dealt so many potentially insurmountable odds, Wilma Rudolph used her focus and determination to overcome each setback, as well as confront racism, sexism and the lingering effects of her disability (post-polio syndrome). At times, she seems almost superhuman—so, ask students to consider whether they think she ever felt moody or insecure as well as what things might have helped her pull herself forward, and to reflect on strategies they too can rely on to keep their “eyes on the prize” when the going gets tough. The author’s end notes tell a bit more about Rudolph’s life—but it is worth helping students explore what it might have been like to be a young Black woman in Rome in 1960 (and the pressure to represent not only her country, but her race and gender)!

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Feelings, Gender Issues, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Responsibility, Social Systems, Team-Building

Woman Who Outshone the Sun, The/La mujer que brillaba aún más que el sol

Alejandro Cruz Martinez (*Author of the original poem*), Rosalma Zubizarretta & David Schechter (*Story Authors*), Fernando Olivera (*Illustrator*)

Turtleback Books: A Division of Scholastic: 1994

The Zapotec folk tale of Lucia Zenteno (an earth-mother with magical powers) is re-told in this beautifully-illustrated poem (in both English and Spanish). The legend claims that Lucia was so beautiful that when she bathed in the river, her hair would soak up all the water and fish until she combed them out. The villagers’ jealousy of her beauty and fear of her unusual powers turns into mistreatment, and Lucia is driven from the village. While she refuses to respond in-kind to their meanness, she does leave them without their fish or water. Eventually, the village begs her to return and she restores their water and fish. The moral of this story is familiar: it is important to treat everyone with kindness, but the poem also touches on concepts like environmental stewardship, community, and cooperation. There are also a range of multicultural themes, including the beliefs of indigenous peoples, prejudice, and respecting individual differences. The aspect of “teaching the villagers a lesson” as retaliation for their ignorance and unkindness deserves to be addressed directly with students. As a teaching extension note: author Martinez died tragically trying to help his people (the Zapotec Indians of Mexico) with their water rights—providing a real life link to this fascinating legend.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Global Citizenship, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Systems

"Outside of a dog, a book is a man's best friend. Inside of a dog, it's too dark to read."
Groucho Marx (Comedian)

A Long Walk to Water: Based on a True Story

Linda Sue Park (*Author*)

HMH Books for Young Readers: 2011

The primary (true) story begins in 1985 when eleven-year-old Salva Dut's Sudanese village is attacked by brutal rebel soldiers. His teacher instructs the boys to run, and Salva does—leaving behind his family and everything familiar to him. This short book chronicles his arduous walk across the desert to the perceived safety of refugee camps in Ethiopia and Kenya. Like many “Lost Boys” of Sudan, he searches for his family and a safe place to stay, enduring loneliness, boredom, deprivation, and unspeakable hardships (e.g., attacks by armed rebels, close calls with predatory wildlife, and the horrific expulsion from the Ethiopian camp in 1991-92 where thousands were killed trying to escape across a crocodile-infested river). Salva survives, even helping to get 1,200 boys to safety in Kenya. Once in Kenya, he is selected as one of 3,000 young men to immigrate to the US, where he is adopted by a family in Rochester, New York. This story alternates with that of a fictional young Sudanese girl named Nya. Set in 2008, Nya makes dangerous twice-daily trips to collect water (often tainted) for her family—each trip takes a grueling four hours. The book ends with the “meeting” of the two characters: Salva (now an adult) has returned to his native Sudan to build a well (through a foundation he created), making fresh water available for Nya's community and freeing her to go to school. This is the one of the first books for middle school students about Sudan's “Lost Boys,” and is notable in highlighting an individual who chooses to return and give back to his community. While this book focuses on Salva's determination to survive and make the world a better place, and spares readers most of the gruesome details of the Sudanese genocide, it does contain descriptions of violence, murder, starvation, and war. Its brevity also skips over information that might help students better understand Salva and Nya's lives, their struggles, feelings and culture. Students would benefit from supplementary information about the Lost Boys (beyond his end note), the political struggles that shaped their lives both before and since coming to the US (e.g., such as a 2013 [New York Times](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/08/magazine/a-lost-boy-grows-up.html?_r=1&)^{xv} article on another Lost Boy; Dut's [Water for Sudan Foundation](http://www.waterforsouthsudan.org)^{xvi}, and relief organizations that follow human rights violations in the Sudan (e.g. [Save the Children](http://www.savethechildren.org)^{xvii} and [World Relief](http://worldrelief.org)^{xviii}). Older students would benefit from learning more about the ongoing dangers to girls like Nya, who are often vulnerable to sexual violence, HIV, and who are deprived of an education. For all students, be sure to consider the characters' feelings (e.g., Does Salva miss his family? What do you think it's be like to be adopted and brought to a place so different from his homeland? How might Nya feel her long trips to get water each day? What do you think the characters envision for their futures? What changes might Salva's success to girls and boys in villages like Nya? What do you think it was like for Salva to return “home”? What ways do you think the US adoption of Lost Boys helped or changed them (i.e., was it all positive)? A separate Teacher Guide (based in Common Core Standards) was not reviewed (Sarah Pennington, CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform: 2012).

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Global Citizenship, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Serving the Community, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems, Violence

xv http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/08/magazine/a-lost-boy-grows-up.html?_r=1&

xvi <http://www.waterforsouthsudan.org>;

xvii <http://www.savethechildren.org>

xviii <http://worldrelief.org>

Any Small Goodness: A Novel of the Barrio

Tony Johnson (*Author*)

Scholastic: 2003

Narrated by eleven-year-old Arturo Rodriguez, this simple chapter book consists of nonlinear vignettes that contain liberal use of Spanish words/translations to tell the story of a young boy and his supportive extended Mexican family who have recently moved to East Los Angeles. Set against the stark backdrop of LA's "haves" and "have nots" this present-tense account is filled with the physical details of daily life at home, at school, and in the barrio among a loving family. Arturo's family faces the immigrant's balancing act of trying to adjust and assimilate to a new culture, while retaining essential elements of their own cultural identity. Arturo sees how dangerous life is in the barrio but his wise father reminds him that there is both good and bad in the world and that "any small goodness is of value." Arturo tries to see and search for the positives in his life, and with his friends finds a creative, covert method to counteract damage inflicted by poverty and gangs to make their lives and neighborhood better (one strategy includes forming their own Green Needle gang that sneaks up to people's houses and leaves Christmas trees and gifts on their porches). This novel also explores the conflict between loving family values and negative outside influences that can lead young people down the wrong path—common in poor and urban environments—and particularly the pressure on boys to join gangs. It also opens the door to understand how cultural values are affected by integration, while offering a proud view of Mexican families, culture, and a positive look at life in the LA Barrio. The simple language will make this a good choice for limited readers and highlights the experiences of students for whom English is not their first language (or whose family members speak limited English).

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Serving the Community, Social Systems, Violence

Bamboo People

Mitali Perkins (*Author*)

Charlesbridge: 2012

This historical novel is narrated by two teenage boys on opposing sides of the conflict between the Burmese government and the Karenni, one of Burma's many ethnic minorities. Taking place in modern-day Burma (Myanmar), the boys' intertwined stories reveal their fears, prejudices, and the violence and hardships they experience. Fifteen-year-old Chiko is a quiet, studious student whose medical doctor father has been arrested as a traitor; seized by the government, Chiko is forced into military training and groomed for guerrilla warfare against the Karenni (who live in villages and refugee camps along the Thai-Burmese border). Chiko and his patrol stumble into land mines, and he is wounded. He finds himself at the mercy of Tu Reh, an angry Karenni rebel fighter about his age. Tu Reh has been living in a refugee camp since his home and bamboo fields were destroyed by Burmese soldiers, and now he struggles with his conscience and his desire for revenge as he decides whether or not to save Chiko. For both boys, family, friendships, and loyalty have been at the center of their lives, and they are deeply conflicted and don't fully understand the nature of the conflict they have been thrust into. As young soldiers, they face suffering, death, harrowing situations, and life-and-death decisions; through it all, both learn the meaning of courage. The teens are dynamic narrators whose adolescent angst and perspectives permeate the trauma of their daily lives. This story and universal themes will inspire teens to explore humanitarian issues, reasons for ethnic conflict, the realities of war, and the results of conditioned

hatred of those seen as “other.” There are certainly many parallels that can be made to conflicts around the globe, including those involving the US. Use this to highlight gender issues and expectations about the boys’ roles as soldiers and what it means to become men, as well as the impact their social class differences might have had on their feelings and actions. The author's notes provide helpful background information on Burmese history and the ongoing military regime's repression of minorities and an [author’s discussion guide](#)^{xix} is also available online.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Global Citizenship, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Systems, Violence

Before We Were Free

Julia Alvarez (*Author*)

Perfection Learning: 2004

As the story begins (circa 1960), twelve-year-old Anita de la Torre is a self-absorbed “tween” in the Dominican Republic. Consumed by a crush on an American boy next door, she is oblivious to her country’s violent and repressive dictatorship under Rafael Trujillo, until most of her relatives have fled the country and the secret police begin to terrorize her family. Events are told from Anita’s point of view as she deals first with her family’s desire to protect her from the harsh realities of the situation, then with a series of frightening events that make her realize her father and uncle are immersed not just in opposition to the country’s dictator, but a plot to assassinate him and launch a coup d’état. When Trujillo is killed, but the overthrow of his government fails, the revolution crumbles (in part due to withdrawal of American support). Anita’s father and uncle are immediately arrested and imprisoned. By that time, Anita’s older sister has been spirited away to the US, and her brother has taken refuge in the American Consulate. Anita and her mother are also forced into hiding in a friend’s closet (she even keeps an Anne Frank-like diary). When she and her mother finally escape to the US into loving arms of family, their relief is dampened by reports of the torture and death of her father and uncle. Anita must now come to terms with her new life and become accustomed to the freedoms she once longed for. Based on experiences of the author and her family, this historical novel will encourage students to consider what it would be like living under a dictatorship: To be afraid to go to school or to freely share your thoughts and opinions? What if the police could invade your home at will, family members stopped and jailed without cause, held or even tortured or killed? How would it feel to get away—or be left behind? Do you agree that “life without freedom is no life at all?” Would you risk your family’s safety for freedom? Students from more protected or privileged backgrounds may be able to relate this story to their own personal experiences—who, like Anna, may be unaware of their social privileges, global politics, or the impact that politics have on the lives of others until they are personally affected. Students might also want to look at whether they think Anna was more protected or sheltered by her family because she was a girl. Topics such as loyalty and betrayal, “freedom fighting,” corruption, torture, loss of innocence, human rights and civil liberties can be introduced. Available in Spanish.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Global Citizenship, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Social Responsibility & Activism, Violence

xix <http://www.bamboopeople.org/p/discussion-guide.html>

Because of Mr. Terupt

Rob Buyea (*Author*)

Yearling: 2011

Told in short easy-to read chapters, each narrated by a different fifth-grade student at a fictional VT school, the students' own internal and external struggles are revealed. They also offer their individual perspectives about their teacher, giving insight into their own flaws, insecurities, and problems: Jessica, the new girl, smart and perceptive, has a hard time fitting in; Alexia is a manipulative and mercurial bully; Peter is class clown and a troublemaker; Luke, the brain; Danielle never stands up for herself; withdrawn Anna's home situation makes her an outcast; and Jeffrey hates school. Their energetic but strict young teacher, Mr. Terupt, seems to know how to relate to each one, teaches them to think for themselves and challenges them to become better people. When an accident involving a snowball leaves Mr. Terupt in a coma, this story (told chronologically) relates the chain of events that change everything. Though he ultimately survives, the narrators reveal both how a caring teacher can make a difference, and how challenging that can be. While some of the student voices are more authentic-sounding than others, students will relate to each character as "someone they know" and the book succeeds in articulating different perspectives.

Themes: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Team-Building

Breadwinner, The

Deborah Ellis (*Author, Illustrator*)

Paw Prints: 2008

Since her father was jailed for having a Western education, eleven-year-old Parvana has rarely left her family's one-room apartment in a bombed-out building in Kabul, Afghanistan. Now, life for Parvana, her mother, two sisters and baby brother has changed dramatically. As a result of the Taliban-takeover, they are prohibited from appearing in public (to play or shop, or walk) unless covered head to toe, and escorted by a male family member; girls may no longer attend school; and women may not work outside the home. Because they now have no male family-members in their household to support or assist them, they are literally trapped inside, and become increasingly desperate for basic necessities, until Parvana daringly disguises herself as a boy, cutting her hair and donning the clothes of her dead older brother. Though the fear of discovery is very real (and carries dire consequences for her and her family) Parvana is also grateful for the limited freedom she has to go outside again. She manages to eke out a meager living so her family can survive; in the process, she is even able to see an illiterate Taliban soldier as human when she reads a letter for him. While the dialogue is occasionally stilted, some of the issues oversimplified, and the ending sketchy, this novel is based on the author's actual interviews with women and girls in Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan and Russia, including one mother who disguised her daughter as a boy. It highlights real issues uncovered by international media and relief groups about the reality of life under the Taliban (particularly for women and girls) in a way that is accessible to middle school students. Students will benefit from a bit more information about the geography, cultural practices, social structure of Afghanistan and life under the Taliban. This book, the first in a trilogy that includes The Breadwinner, Parvana's Journey and Mud City, can be used to encourage discussion about freedom, friendship, the "collateral damage" of war (including the burden put on children and the courage it takes to survive against terrible odds), religious fanaticism, stereotypes, bias, oppression of

women, human rights, and the impact of social activism to create change. There are many ways to link this book to current events, resources, and aid groups (including the [Malala Fund](#)). Students may also be interested in that fact that the author is donating her book sales to an organization dedicated to educating girls in refugee camps, and learning more about the organization and others like it. Older students (Grades 9-12) can draw parallels between this and similar literature they have read: e.g., about Afghanistan: Khaled Hosseini's The Kite Runner or One Thousand Splendid Suns; the Holocaust: Diary of Anne Frank or Jane Yolen's Briar Rose; or violence and oppression against girls and women: Slave by Mende Nazar and Damien Lewis or Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Global Citizenship, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Serving the Community, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems, Violence

Boy on the Wooden Box, The: How the Impossible Became Possible...on Schindler's List

Leon Leyson (*Author*), Marilyn J Harran and Elisabeth B Leyson (*Contributors*)

Atheneum Books for Young Readers: 2013

In his moving memoir of the Holocaust, the author (born Leib Lezjon in Poland) shares the story of how his happy childhood as the youngest of five children was shattered when, at age ten, the Nazis invaded Poland and rounded up his family and countless other Jews and forcibly relocated them to the Kraków ghetto. With incredible luck and perseverance, young Leib was able to survive the Kraków-Plaszów concentration camp overseen by the notoriously sadistic commandant, Amon Göth. Ultimately, the heroic efforts of German industrialist Oskar Schindler saved Leib's life, and the lives of his mother, his father, and two of his four siblings, when their names were added to the list of workers in his factory (a list that became world-renowned as "Schindler's List"). The simple act allowed them to stay alive because they were deemed necessary to the Nazi German cause. The only memoir published by a former Schindler's List child, and the youngest, the author recounts the day-to-day existence in the factory and the fear and deprivation he endured there. He also offers a unique perspective on the man who became his lifelong hero, including memories of his personal interactions with Schindler himself. Though the story sometimes meanders, it will offer mature young readers the opportunity to view the Holocaust through the eyes of a child who lived through it. Be sure to have additional materials about Oskar Schindler available as a reference, and use this to extend social studies curriculum about World War II. Be sure to call attention to the author's tone and apparent attitude regarding his experiences, and ask students to speculate about his apparent forgiveness and lack of anger or hatred for what he endured; why it's important to him to talk about his accomplishments as an adult; his legacy of hope; and the symbolism of the illustrations of the birds that appear throughout the book. Students might also write about images and strategies they use to help them cope with difficult situations in their own lives (or to practice some as a group). While the reading level is appropriate even for some elementary readers, the content is likely to be too disturbing for those below Grades 6-8.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Global Citizenship, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems, Violence

Bronx Masquerade

Nikki Grimes (*Author*), Christopher Myers (*Illustrator*)

Dial: 2001/ Speak: 2003

The full annotation for this book appears in the Grades 9-12 section. A fictional classroom of inner-city teens open up and find connection with each other by writing their own poetry. Some themes may be considered too mature for Grades 6-8, but selected passages or poems may be suitable for Grades 7-8.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Team-Building, Violence

César, Si, Se Puede/Yes We Can!

Carmen T. Pernier-Grand (*Author*), David Diaz (*Illustrator*)

Two Lions: 2011

This picture book of poems is about Latino Civil Rights leader César Chavez is reviewed in full in Grades 3-5. The poems are complex enough that they will appeal students in Grades 6-8.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Feelings, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Serving the Community, Social Responsibility & Activism

Esperanza Rising

Pam Munoz Ryan (*Author*)

Perfection Learning: 2002

This historical novel is based on the author's Mexican grandmother's life, beginning in the early 1920's, in post-Revolution Mexico and continuing into the Depression/Dust Bowl Years in California. Pre-teen Esperanza is the child of wealthy landowners in Aguascalientes Mexico. Accustomed to being treated like a "queen" by her family, she anticipates a life of privilege, material pleasures, servants, and the cultural traditions of her rich Mexican heritage. When her father is murdered by bandits, his corrupt and powerful stepbrothers try to force her mother into a remarriage to one of them (in an attempt to grab his lands). When she refuses, the uncles retaliate by burning down the family home. Esperanza's mother decides the family must flee (along with their cook and gardener) to the US—but they must leave Esperanza's grandmother behind until they can send for her. Life in the US, as farm-laborers in 1930's California, is not what Esperanza expected and she is woefully unprepared for the realities of hard labor, financial struggles, and prejudice. When her mother falls desperately ill after a dust storm, Esperanza (whose name means "hope") must rise above her difficult circumstances so she and her mother can survive. Esperanza's mother recovers, and they use some of her earnings to bring her Abuelita to the US. The text is filled with Spanish words and expressions, Mexican cultural customs, and snippets about the US and Mexican political climate of the era (including conflicts around efforts to organize farm laborers) Themes include family connections, bullying (Marta), prejudice, privilege, woman's rights, equality, immigration and assimilation, and both class and ethnic tensions.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Responsibility, Violence

Every Living Thing

Cynthia Rylant (*Author*), S. D. Schindler (*Illustrator*)

Modern Curriculum Press: 1988

Though published in 1988, this collection of twelve short stories by the author of the Henry and Mudge series is still relevant for today's students. Each story looks at characters and how they change over time—as a result of their contact with animals. The human and non-human characters are quite diverse: different species of animals include a turtle, dogs, a parrot, squirrels, and a blind goldfish; human characters include both adults and children, both male and female, and include characters such as an alcoholic veteran. Many students can relate to stories about animals, and may be more inclined to reveal their feelings about themselves and their relationships when talking about animals. Because these are short stories, this book is also useful for reluctant readers or those with poor literacy skills. Other themes include animal rights, relationships, addiction, and abuse.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Responsibility

Faithful Elephants: A True Story of Animals, People, and War

Yukio Tsuchiya (*Author*), Ted Lewin (*Illustrator*)

HMH Books for Young Readers: 1997

This picture book is not appropriate for younger readers and will likely be disturbing for some middle school students. This short picture book tells the tragic story, based on actual events at Tokyo's Ueno Zoo (the oldest in Japan) during the late summer of 1943, towards the end of World War II. Told from the eyes of the zookeepers, the gut-wrenching story focuses on the decision of the Japanese government to euthanize the entire collection of zoo animals—and focuses in particular on the death (by starvation) of the zoo's three prized elephants. Part of the tragedy of this sobering story is that the decisions depicted are now known to have been unnecessary—the result of propaganda by the Japanese government to motivate its populace. While this story is painful to read, it provides an opportunity for students to discuss cultural differences and attitudes about obedience, the impact of propaganda, war and “collateral damage,” and parallels to current global events and political violence. Other themes include kindness and compassion, feelings, communication and relationships (including inter-species relationships and communication), animal sentience, animal rights, and restitution/making amends.

THEMES: Communication, Feelings, Global Citizenship, Justice/Injustice, Respecting Differences, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems, Violence

Fat Boy Chronicles, The

Diane Lang and Michael Buchanan (*Authors*)

Sleeping Bear Press: 2010

Written in a first-person journal format that spans the course of a year, this book chronicles the difficulties of fifteen-year-old Jimmy Winterpock, who is not only the new kid in town, but (at 5 feet, 5 inches and 187 pounds) suffers many indignities by peers, who consider him less than a person because of his weight. Subjected to a daily barrage of bullying, humiliation, and cruel harassment, he manages to

find comfort in his family, his church youth group, and his favorite foods. When his English teacher assigns a journal writing project, Jimmy records his struggles, his efforts to make friends and escape bullying, and his aspirations (i.e., to lose weight and “win the girl of his dreams”). Frustrated and desperate, Jimmy begins a life-changing plan of diet and exercise. He finds that as he loses weight, his outlook on life changes as well (and in the process, also goes from “victim” to “hero”). Inspired by a true story, this book poignantly portrays the pain and isolation felt by many overweight teenagers as they try to find their way in a world obsessed with outward appearances and body image (including expectations for boys). Some of the food-facts and side plots are distracting and some students may not relate to Jimmy’s “good boy” portrayal—but it is an engaging read. Be sure to read this before presenting to your students: some teachers may want to read selected passages of this book aloud to Grade 6-8 students (or use exclusively with Grades 9-12) due to mature or potentially disturbing themes: e.g., one character engages in “cutting” (Whitney, Jimmy’s ‘love interest’); there is child abuse and neglect by alcoholic parents (Paul, Jimmy’s friend); runaways who suffer serious injuries; depiction of teen drug use; and some mild sexuality. That said, it will likely encourage conversations about these difficult subjects. Obesity, its effects on self esteem, self-perception, and social relationships and the bias obese individuals face are all central themes in this book. Other topics include: peer pressure to conform, bias-based bullying, determination and perseverance to reach a goal, ebb and flow of friendships, popularity and privilege. There is also a CD movie available to watch after reading the book (listed in the *Adult Resources* section, below) which includes author and director commentaries, cast interviews, and information about the International Bullying Prevention Association. Teachers may want to prepare for this reading this book by visiting the [national bullying prevention website](#)^{xx} for current resources about bullying and obesity, and use this as a resource to invite students to view relevant video clips. There is also a [teaching guide](#)^{xxi} and website associated with the book.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Human Rights, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Violence

Gunstories: Life-Changing Experiences with Guns

S. Beth Atkin (*Author, Illustrator*)

Katherine Tegen Books: 2007

Guns are a fact of life for young people growing up in the US—both in homes and on the street—and their lives are often dramatically affected by them. The issue of gun control is a divisive one in our society—particularly following increased media coverage and public outcry over school shootings that have taken place since the 1999 shooting at Columbine High School, including more than 75 that have taken place in the eighteen months since the Sandy Hook Elementary school shootings in Newtowne, CT in December 2012. Books written for teens on this topic are rare. This well-researched nonfiction book consists of the author’s photographs and candid interviews with eighteen teens (each presented as a separate story) and examines how their individual experiences with guns have been life-changing for them. While the stories include both positive (pro-gun) and negative experiences, the book’s major flaw is the limited range of teens interviewed (they fall into two main groups: White teens, most of whom are girls from rural Ohio involved in sport-shooting on a 4-H-sponsored shooting team; and Hispanic boys and girls—some of whom were involved in gangs—mostly from the Los Angeles, CA area

xx www.stopbullying.gov

xxi <http://thefatboychronicles.com>

and who have either been victims of gun violence themselves, or had a family member or friend shot, wounded or killed. The interviews deal with accidental shootings and suicide, and include the teens' opinions about guns (strongly expressed, but not necessarily well-informed). The lack of diversity of interviewees is an important aspect to explore with students and to get them talking about their own experiences—and how peer and adult influence, race and social class play a role for them (and the teens interviewed). The inclusion of the teens' opinions will encourage students to separate fact from opinion and to become better informed themselves if you also provide access (after screening them yourself) to included materials: web postings, the text of the Second Amendment, suggested readings and an annotated list of organizations related to gun safety and use, including crisis hot lines.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems, Violence

Hip Hop Speaks to Children: A Celebration of Poetry with a Beat

Nikki Giovanni (*Author*), Michele Noiset, Jeremy Tugeau, Kristen Balouch, Damian Ward & Alicia Vergel de Dios (*Illustrators*)

Sourcebooks Jabberwocky: 2008

A complete annotation of this anthology of songs appears in the Grade 3-5 section. The content and format will appeal to some students Grades 6-8, particularly reluctant readers.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings

Hot Issues Cool Choices: Facing Bullies, Peer Pressure, Popularity and Put Downs

Sarah McLeod Humphrey (*Author*), Brian Strassburg (*Illustrator*)

Prometheus: 2007

The full annotation of this collection of problems-solving vignettes appears in the Grade 3-5 section. Though examples are set in fictional elementary school, slight alterations will make them useful with students in Grades 6-8, along with other books in this series including *It's Up to You: What Do You Do* (1998), which appears in the 2009 *Companion Bibliography*.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Team-Building

How to Build Your Own Country

Valerie Wyatt (*Author*), Fred Rix (*Illustrator*)

Kids Can Press: 2009

The complete annotation for this picture book of data appears in the Grade 3-5 section. With Grades 6-8, select portions to spark interest in research about emerging nations. Supplement with information from organization like United Nations Youth Delegations or aide groups (e.g., [UNICEF](#), [Heifer International](#), [The Malala Fund](#), [Room to Read](#), [Greenpeace](#), etc.), to explore world problems such as poverty, global warming, human rights violations, child labor, national security and international aid.

THEMES: Communication, Global Citizenship, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems, Team-Building

Hunger Games Trilogy, The: The Hunger Games, Catching Fire, Mockingjay

Suzanne Collins (*Author, Illustrator*)

Scholastic Press: 2011

In the post-apocalyptic society of Panem (once North America), a pristine Capitol is surrounded by thirteen districts, each with a distinctive character and industry. The districts previously revolted against the Capitol and were defeated. The nation's totalitarian dictator harshly controls each district, symbolized by the annual Hunger Games, a perverse Olympiad where the twelve remaining districts send one teen-aged boy and girl to compete as gladiators in a fight to the death on live TV. Sixteen-year-old Katniss Everdeen, who lives with her mother and younger sister, views participation as a death sentence, but volunteers to compete in place of her younger sister, who has been randomly chosen. Her hardscrabble life in the impoverished coal-mining District 12 has uniquely equipped Katniss to survive, and she must make moral and ethical decisions that balance survival against love and human compassion, qualities her teammate Peeta embodies. When she and Peeta win the competition in an unprecedented draw, Katniss becomes a symbol of hope and redemption for the oppressed people of her district. The second two books in the trilogy follow Katniss' rise as an unwitting and reluctant symbol of hope who inspires, then inflames, and ultimately leads a revolutionary uprising, uncovering secrets about Panem and its leaders in the process. This grim dystopian novel contains killing and violence, but the most gruesome details are inferred (they occur off-page). The books are filled with symbolism (like the hybrid "mockingjay" emblem) and hope, and include themes that appeal to Grades 6-8. The series allows deep conversations about social justice, friendship, revenge and compassion, standing up for your beliefs, gender role stereotypes, the value of working together, the power of hope. Questions to pose include: How do people retain their humane qualities in times of oppression? What happens when we choose entertainment over humanity? What role do TV and media play in controlling Panem? What are the attributes of a winner? What is true loyalty? What happens when a society encourages privileges among some and disenfranchises or marginalizes others (and what are some examples)? A related wiki-page describes [Panem](#)^{xxii} and its society can be used to create additional student activities.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Serving the Community, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems, Team-Building , Violence

xxii <http://thehungergames.wikia.com/wiki/Panem>

I Am Malala: How One Girl Stood Up for Education and Changed the World

Malala Yousafzai and Patricia McCormick (*Authors*)

Little, Brown Books for Young Readers: 2014

Social scientists report that educating girls between the ages of ten and fourteen (approximately Grades 5-7) is the single most effective way to end global poverty, and according to economist and former Harvard University president Lawrence Summers “may [provide] the single highest-return investment available in the developing world.” A complete annotation of the original book ([I Am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban](#)) appears in Grade 9-12 section. As this bibliography goes to press, this new adapted version (for Grade 5-8 students and reluctant readers Grades 9-12) has just become available (and has not been reviewed). However the story is the same (and some of the unevenness in writing of the first volume has reportedly been addressed in this version). There are many free support materials available to expand discussions with students: including an official [music video](#)^{xxiii}; her passionate 2013 “[birthday speech](#)”^{xxiv} to the UN General Assembly; a [global foundation](#)^{xxv} in her name that promotes education for girls; and various [news](#)^{xxvi} interviews.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Global Citizenship, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Serving the Community, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems, Team-Building, Violence

If You Lived When Women Won Their Rights

Anne Kamma (*Author*), Pamela Johnson (*Illustrator*)

Scholastic Inc.: 2008

Part of a series that includes books about immigration, slavery and civil rights, this book focuses on Women’s Suffrage. Students may know that women’s rights were not originally guaranteed under the US Constitution, but they may be surprised to learn the many ways that women’s lives were restricted. In 1848, the first convention for women’s rights anywhere in the world was held in Seneca Falls, NY, attended by a group of American women and some men; two years later, at a subsequent convention, freed slave Sojourner Truth gave her famous “Ain’t I a woman?” speech. This easy-to-read nonfiction book uses a question-and-answer format to describe how women worked to obtain equal rights with men, culminating (72 years later) in the ratification of the 19th amendment to the Constitution and giving women the right to vote (though some states, such as Maryland) did not ratify the amendment until as late as 1941, and women’s equal rights are still not ensured today). Included are timelines, information about the primary leaders of the Suffrage and the women’s rights movement. This text can be used as a reference or questions can be used to generate discussion about ways that women’s rights have changed, and ways they still are not equal. Students may want to debate the pros and cons of the current proposed [Equal Rights Amendment](#)^{xxvii} which was still not passed by Congress in 2014. Questions to ask might include: Why are women’s rights important? How do women’s rights affect their children and families here and around the world? Why do you think right to education for women is linked to

xxiii <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iAi2pY7b0MQ>

xxiv <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5SClmlL43dTo&feature=kp>

xxv <http://malalafund.org>

xxvi <http://abcnews.go.com/WNT/video/diane-sawyer-sits-inspirational-malala-yousafzai-20499735>

xxvii <http://www.equalrightsamendment.org/overview.htm>

reduced violence and oppression of women and girls? Why do you think some people opposed women's rights prior to passage of the 19th Amendment and now? Do you think men and women deserve the same pay for doing the same work? In what ways are racism and sexism related?

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Gender Issues, Global Citizenship, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems

Immigrant Kids

Russell Freedman (*Author*)

Scott Foresman: 1995

A full annotation of this collection of photographs and accounts of the lives of the first wave of immigrants to the US (1800-1900) appears in the Grade 3-5 section. It is easy to read (for reluctant readers) and the non-fiction accounts provide a useful Grades 6-8 resource, in conjunction with social studies curricula.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Global Citizenship, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Activism, Social Systems

Kizzy Ann Stamps

Jeri Watts (*Author*)

Candlewick: 2013 (also available through Scholastic)

It is 1963, and though segregation is no longer legal in Lynchburg, Mississippi, where she lives, twelve-year-old Kizzy Ann Stamps does not want to leave her familiar one-room schoolhouse to go to school with White children. As she prepares for her first year at an integrated school, she worries about the color of her skin, the long scar on her face, and how she will be received by all-White students at the new school. Based on her experiences, she has good reason to worry. She is reminded daily of the color barriers that still exist—including being denied entering her prized border collie in a dog show. The book centers first on Kizzy's letters to her prospective teacher, in which she relays her fears and questions; then, in her classroom journal in her new school. When a White neighbor unexpectedly helps her older brother James (whose own experiences in an integrated school have landed him in trouble), Kizzy begins to see people as individuals, not just by their color. This is an inspiring novel with a strong female protagonist. There are many quotes that provide great discussion starters: "I made a mistake and let down my guard. I let them in, and now I feel a fool." or "Sometimes...it feels like a part of me has given up on being treated equal...Seeing what life could be like is hard. What if I'll always be...separate?" (Kizzy); "The world can't change unless we start making it change." (Mr. McKenna, dog trainer) Themes to discuss include: how we make judgments about people based on their physical appearance, racism, the challenges of facing new situations with trust, the ways that small changes can impact a larger group, and the idea that someone has to take the first step to affect change. Christopher Paul Curtis' *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* offers another perspective.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Responsibility & Activism

Little Prince, The

Antoine de Sainte-Exupéry (*Author*), Katherine Woods (*Translator*)

Harcourt Brace & Company: 1943/1971

“It is only with one’s heart that one can see clearly. What is essential is invisible to the eye.” There are so many memorable quotes in this beautifully translated classic tale! While this book is simply written, and it is appropriate for reluctant readers in this age range, students younger than Grades 6-8 will not grasp the imagery of this novella about a fictional prince fallen to earth. There are many symbolic themes to plumb. On the surface, it is a fantasy about an aviator stranded in the middle of the Sahara, who encounters a small boy who announces that he is a prince who travels among the planets (consider how becoming more child-like and open is valuable to the aviator). Alternatively, the aviator may be suffering from hallucinations brought on by heat prostration (use his internal dialogue to evaluate what is most important in life). Or the Little Prince’s interplanetary travels can be viewed as an allegory to look for meaning in life: a caution against becoming insensitive to individuals or our environment. There are also science fiction, humanist/environmental, religious/spiritual, and existential questions that can be considered. This is one of those books where personal meanings change with age, so it would be interesting to ask students which character they most relate to (and how that might change over time): the Little Prince? the Aviator? the Fox? the Sheep? the Rose? or the people on the tiny planet? While an old book, it is still relevant to today’s students because of its many layers and interpretations. As a writing assignment, you might ask students to write a letter to their future selves about the meaning the book holds for them now. Consider reading this aloud to middle-school students (particularly if you are able to get a copy of the hardback version with large illustrations). Each character is vividly drawn and this tender story of loneliness, friendship, love and loss is threaded with themes such as environmental stewardship. Be sure to use either the original French (as part of academic curricula), or the older Katherine Woods translation! Though it is out of print, these are available in libraries and used-book sales and are far superior to the newer translation by Richard Howard (which is not recommended). The author was an extremely interesting (and rather mysterious) individual who managed to infuse spiritual, social-political, and scientific commentary into this compact, very accessible book, that can be read at different levels of meaning (allowing readers to find personal interpretations and messages). There are many adaptations (music, theater, fine arts) and formats (book, movie, CD) also available in this title.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Global Citizenship, Human Rights, Respecting Differences, Serving the Community, Social Responsibility, Social Systems

Looking for X

Deborah Ellis (*Author*)

Groundwood Books: 2001

Eleven-year-old Khyber (who has renamed herself after Afghanistan’s Khyber Pass) lives in a low-income Toronto neighborhood with her single mother (a former stripper), and her severely disabled twin brothers who have autism. Khyber’s life at home and school are filled with drama and crises—her family is on welfare, her brothers need expensive care and medical treatment, the family dodges social workers, Khyber and her brothers are regularly bullied at school, and she has no friends her age (because she has been placed two grades ahead of her peers). In her isolation, she befriends Valerie, a cantankerous but soft-hearted waitress who works at the restaurant where Khyber gets free breakfast in exchange for doing an hour’s worth of chores each week, and a mentally ill homeless woman Khyber

calls “X.” Khyber brings sandwiches and confides in X, but the woman rarely converses because she is hiding from the “secret police.” Khyber’s problems escalate when her mother decides to move her sons into a group residential home. Khyber fights with her mom, is confronted by a group of menacing skinheads who threaten X, is expelled from school due to a false accusation of vandalism and then exonerated by a group of female Elvis impersonators. Then, when X suddenly disappears, a devastated Khyber, determined to search for her, embarks on a frightening all-night odyssey through downtown Toronto. Khyber and her mother eventually move to a new neighborhood to be closer to the boys’ new residential care placement (and to transfer Khyber to a better school), and the two women Khyber has befriended each give her a meaningful departure gift. While elements of the plot stretch believability at times, readers will find the characters natural and will relate to feisty Khyber and the way she copes with her problems. This first novel contains occasional mild swearing and some disrespect for authorities (who are not always portrayed in a positive light, e.g. social services and school staff). This book does provide interesting opportunities to initiate conversations about a whole host of “-isms.”

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Responsibility, Social Systems

Loud Silence of Francine Green, The

Karen Cushman (*Author*)

Clarion Books: 2006

In post World War II (1949-1950) Hollywood, introspective good-girl Francine Green has learned and to avoid trouble at all cost. When she meets fellow eighth-grader Sophie Bowman, her polar opposite, they quickly become friends, changing Francine’s life dramatically. Set in a strict Catholic school for girls, and with the paranoia of McCarthy Era blacklisting and accusations of spying for the Russians as a backdrop, Francine learns that remaining silent in the face of bullying and injustice says as much about who you are, what you believe in, and what you value as taking an active stand. Drawn from the safety of silence by her outspoken and passionate friend, Francine becomes determined to stand up to the bullying principal. This book can be used in conjunction with social studies curricula about the Red Scare, the McCarthy Era, House Committee on Un-American Activities (which ruined lives and careers by blacklisting people who expressed unpopular ideas and labeled them Communists), anarchy, free speech and intellectual freedom, social activism, the atom bomb, the Cold War. It also can be used to draw parallels to more current events (e.g. political and social changes, patriotism, Patriot Act/personal freedoms, liberalism/conservatism, political “whistle-blowers” like Edward Snowden or Julian Assange) or to have students consider what they’re willing to give up to be “secure” in our post-9/11 world. There are also opportunities to focus on friendship, bullying, peer pressure, gender-role stereotypes, and personal qualities such as courage, self-awareness, and the ways we treat others (including the ways that Sophie’s behavior is intentionally provocative). There are some cultural references to the time that may need explanation, but this is an enjoyable read. An alternate book set in this same timeframe is Ellen Levine’s Catch a Tiger by the Toe (2005). The author’s interesting personal note is also bound to provoke discussion.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Global Citizenship, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems

Miracle's Boys

Jacqueline Woodsen (*Author*)

Speak: 2010

Following the accidental drowning death of their father and their mother's sudden death from complications of diabetes, Lafayette, who blames himself for his mother's death, is afraid he will be separated from his two older brothers. The two younger brothers are temporarily placed in the home of a wealthy relative, but once Ty'ree (the eldest) turns twenty one, he gives up a scholarship to MIT to move back to Harlem to support and care for twelve-year-old Lafayette and fifteen-year-old Charlie, who has just been released from a New York juvenile detention facility. Shut off from his friends, Lafayette needs the love and guidance of his older brothers, and wants them to face the world as a team. But Ty'ree is overburdened with responsibilities and Charlie is angry, alienated, and poised to slip back into a life of crime. The events of one dramatic weekend force the boys to make the choice to support each other, rather than give in to their pain and circumstances. Lafayette is the likable and sympathetic narrator of this dialogue-driven story. This is a realistic portrayal of the challenges faced by Biracial brothers growing up poor in contemporary Harlem and will be easy for students to follow. The depiction of the boys' insecurities and range of genuine emotions (beyond just anger) is refreshing. This book will encourage students to consider the roles that poverty, race and disillusionment have on shaping self-esteem. Other themes include the importance of family, gender-role stereotypes, responsibility, personal values, personal satisfaction and achievement. Students might debate whether they think Ty'ree made the right decision for himself and his brothers by giving up his scholarship and moving from their relative's comfortable home back to Harlem. There is a three-part mini-series by the same name, loosely based on this story (directed by Spike Lee, LeVar Burton and Bill Duke; 2005) that provides a comparison for plot elements and character portrayals.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Systems, Team-Building, Violence

Mockingbird

Katherine Erskine (*Author, Illustrator*)

Puffin: 2011

Ten-year-old Caitlin is exceedingly bright and a gifted artist, but her Asperger's Syndrome makes social interactions, as well as understanding and interpreting emotions, major challenges for her. Told in first-person narrative, readers experience Caitlin's black-and-white world as she tries to come to grips with the death of her beloved older brother Devon in a middle-school shooting. Devon always helped Caitlin interpret the world and now her widowed father, though loving and patient is too distraught and mired in deep depression to help his daughter make sense of Devon's death. While her father is at times distant and exasperated by his daughter's literal observations, dispassionate interpretations, and questions, her wise and compassionate social worker, Mrs. Banks is a stabilizing force who helps Caitlin deal with emotions she doesn't understand, cope with her loss and find closure, and make friends. The novel title comes from Devon's favorite movie To Kill A Mockingbird (he calls his sister "Scout"), which also plays a key role in the father/daughter healing process as they work together to finish Devon's Eagle Scout Project. Though the behavior changes in Caitlin's classmates may seem a bit tidy and her desire to find closure not just for herself but for the community is a bit unrealistic, Caitlin's voice, literal thinking, and the behaviors that annoy and exasperate peers and adults are authentic. By bringing the reader

inside Caitlin's mind, students have an opportunity to see the world from her perspective and perhaps will be more likely to feel empathy for peers they might have otherwise have labeled "weird." There are a lot of issues to tackle in this novel: community response to a shared tragedy, emotional disabilities (including Asperger's and depression), and a tragic death of a family member. Other topics include family bonds, grief (and different ways to reach closure after a loss), and what constitutes "normal." As an extension activity, students may be interested in learning more about the autistic researcher and activist Temple Grandin and how she parlayed her perceptions to become a renowned specialist on animal behavior. Note: while the reading level is appropriate for upper elementary grade students, the complex themes make it a solid Grade 6-8 book and will elicit better discussions with middle-schoolers.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Violence

My Childhood Under Fire: A Sarajevo Diary

Nadja Halilbegovich (*Author*)

Kids Can Press: 2006

When the bombing began in Sarajevo in 1992, the twelve-year old author began to keep a diary which poignantly chronicles the hurt, pain, and despair the fighting within her country caused, along with the fear and loss caused by the death and destruction of war. Thousands of children were killed (and the author herself was severely injured by shell). This non-fiction book alternates excerpts from her childhood journal entries with reflections as an adult, punctuated by many black-and-white photos which show the young girl with her family, before and during the war. Three years after the conflict began, Ms. Halilbegovich was granted passage to the United States. After a harrowing escape through a tunnel with her mother (who was ultimately forced to stay behind), the author eventually ends up with an American family. Her mother's words of encouragement to "Remember your dream and keep walking!" have continued to inspire her in her efforts to promote peace. Students will need some background information about the Balkan Wars, the disintegration of the Yugoslav republic, and the Bosnian War (chronicled in this book) which involved intense ethnic strife and genocide that has been compared in its intensity to the Holocaust. Use this book to spark discussions about ethical and social issues, ethnic identity, the role of religion and economics in the conflict, views about women, genocide and ethnic warfare, the role and responsibility of the international community in conflicts like this (and similar ones in Rwanda and the Middle East) and linked to current events. Alternatively, use Hanna Jansen's 2006 novel about the Massacre in Rwanda *Over a Thousand Hills I Walk with You*.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Global Citizenship, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems, Violence

OK for Now

Gary Schmidt (*Author*)

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt: 2013

It is 1968, and Doug Swieteck, the youngest of three brothers, is a fourteen-year-old living in upstate New York with his family. Sensitive to a fault, Doug's world changes completely when his dad accepts a new job in northern Maryland and the family relocates there. Now, his dad always seems aloof and in a bad mood; his mom is sad and depressed; his angry troubled older brother Christopher is an apparent juvenile-delinquent in the making; and everyone assumes the worst about Doug. As he tries to find his place in his new town, and to be more than the "skinny thug" that his teachers and the police assume him to be, Doug meets a witty girl his age named Lily Spicer. Lily is an unlikely ally who not only teaches him simple pleasures, like drinking a cold Coke on a hot day, but gives him the strength to endure his alcoholic abusive father, his flawed and victimized mother, the suspicious misconceptions of the small-town community, and the return of his eldest brother, Lucas, an amputee who is also severely emotionally scarred (with PTSD) from his stint in Vietnam. Together, Doug and Lily find a safe haven in the local library and, inspired by the plates of John James Audubon's birds, Doug's finds passion in secretly drawing birds. His journey to become his best self is told with equal parts humor and angst—and the central theme emerges that even when life seems unbearable, it can still end up okay—as long as you have the right support. Each character faces different kinds of challenges and conflicts, providing material to generate class discussions about loss and recovery, friendship and first love, gender-role stereotypes, creativity, baseball and theater, criminal activity, and resilience and survival. Additional topics such as dyslexia, cancer, alcoholism, child abuse and post-traumatic stress (PTSD) (none of which were well-understood or treated in 1968) will be more familiar to students today and may be particularly relevant to those who have family members or friends who have served in the military or have family members with physical disabilities, PTSD, mental health or substance abuse problems. Many characters are complex—portrayed as both “good” and “bad”—and there will be many instances in the book where readers will be forced to change their opinions about various characters. While touted as a companion novel to *The Wednesday Wars*, this novel stands on its own (as Doug is only a minor character in the earlier book).

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Global Citizenship, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Systems, Violence

Our Stories, Our Songs: African Children Talk about AIDS

Deborah Ellis (*Author, Illustrator*)

Fitzhenry & Whiteside: 2005

When the author traveled to Malawi and Zambia in 2003, it was estimated that more than 11.5 million Sub-Saharan children had been orphaned by the AIDS pandemic; by 2010 (the date the latest statistics are available), UNICEF estimated that more than 20 million had lost their parents and members of their extended families who might otherwise have cared for them. This nonfiction book provides short autobiographical interviews with children and teens (many of whom were orphaned and living on the street) punctuated by sepia-toned photographs that personalize each one. Each poignant story shares something of the young people's wide-range of experiences, their families, fears, who cares for them and who they care for, what they are afraid of and what they like to do, what they dream about and

hope for. Despite the hardships and grief each has experienced, each young person's story also shows dignity, kindness and courage as well as efforts they make to help others and make changes within their communities and society. The text is interspersed with quotes from public figures along with many facts about AIDS in Africa and the world (which should be supplemented by more recent [updates](http://www.unicefusa.org/mission/survival/hiv-aids)^{xxviii}), signs and symptoms of HIV infection, and the role social conditions like poverty, child labor, sexual exploitation play in the pandemic spread of the disease. This book offers up a great deal of information about the lives of African children, especially those who have lost family members to AIDS; because it is filled with very personal stories told by real children and youth, it can have a powerful impact on students and can be used to spark discussions about the many topics from the interviews.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Global Citizenship, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems

Out of My Mind

Sharon Draper (*Author*)

Atheneum Books for Young Readers: 2010

Born with severe cerebral palsy (a developmental disability caused by lack of oxygen to the developing or newborn brain that most notably affects movement), ten-year-old Melody is completely dependent upon others to care for her. She has never spoken, walked, made a friend, played a game, or done any of the things other girls her age have done because she is quite literally trapped inside a body she cannot control. Everyone but her parents think she is profoundly retarded—and even they have no idea what she is capable of, or how to reach her. Told through Melody's voice, we learn that she is a wry feisty girl with a prodigious memory and intellect, and one who is determined not to be defined by her significant physical limitations. Thanks to the teamwork of her loving family, good neighbors, a talented and dedicated young teacher, and some cutting-edge technology, Melody is eventually able to use a special computer to put her thoughts into spoken words. The new device allows her to flourish academically in her integrated fifth grade class, but her struggle to be accepted in a "normal" world is just beginning: doubtful teachers, limited resources, dismissive and narrow-minded peers, superficial values about appearances, and her own disability challenge Melody at every turn. Though her contributions in class qualify her and fellow classmates to participate on a televised national quiz show, she is left behind at the airport, missing the flight that would have taken her to the finals with her team. Devastated by the team's thoughtless (and intentional) exclusion, a near-tragedy (a car accident involving her little sister) makes Melody see what's truly important. (Spoiler alert: Melody's sister does recover, and this added plot twist is not gratuitous but serves to emphasize Melody's physical limitations, dependence on others, and the challenges she faces communicating in the "normal" world. It also serves to move the plot forward to help her put her own setbacks into perspective, and move on). Melody is a character that students are more likely to admire than pity, and they are also likely to see themselves reflected in some of the characters of her classmates. The story allows discussion about empathy, perseverance, resilience, bravery, acceptance, open-minded thinking, the power love has in helping us succeed, the importance society places on outward appearances and the devastating and lasting power of "small" selfish slights. Like Eleanor Estes' *The Hundred Dresses*, this book does not have a happy ending (though the outcome is realistic and aptly portrays the struggles, hurt, bias, and injustice faced by many individuals with disabilities). As with Estes' book, there will be a lot to debate! The

xxviii <http://www.unicefusa.org/mission/survival/hiv-aids>

ending of this book provides a message that is critically important for able-bodied students whose own lives are severely limited by their circumstances—where persistence and resilience play an essential role. The message that “it doesn’t matter how many times you get knocked down, what matters is how many times you get back up” will resonate for these students. As teachers, use opportunities to help them strategize what they need to move forward, what changes they can make on their own, what personal strategies help them “get back up,” and which people inspire and lift them up (physically and spiritually)? There are many possible curriculum connections and extension activities to science, social studies, and technology: brain development, [cerebral palsy](#)^{xxix}, technological inventions and other supports that aid daily living of individuals with disabilities, [Americans with Disabilities](#)^{xxx} and [Act](#),^{xxxi} or biographical information about individuals who are similarly challenged (such as physicist Stephen Hawking, to whom Melody compares herself, or artist Christy Brown, whose book [My Left Foot](#) describes his own life with severe cerebral palsy, artist Frida Kahlo, or others who meet the challenges of daily life in spite of physical disabilities that many might consider insurmountable. This The author has written many books for teens, is a celebrated educator, and herself the parent of a disabled daughter (though this book is not based on her daughter); an excellent [interview](#)^{xxxii} with her provides insights about her work on this particular book.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Team-Building

Paperboy

Vince Vawter (*Author*)

Yearling: 2014

There are actually two subplots at the center of this semi-autobiographical novel. The first is a coming of age story about eleven-year-old Victor Volmer (known as Little Man), who suffers from a severe stutter; the second (and less developed) is about racism set against a backdrop of segregated life in pre-Civil-Rights-era Memphis in 1959. Both make this a worthwhile read for Grade 6-8 students and the plot holes can be used to launch further discussions. The novel is told through Victor’s first-person narrative and opens with him telling about himself and his life (typed in small blocks of comma-free paragraphs): though he can throw a wicked fastball and has the best pitching arm in town, he has difficulty speaking even a single word without stuttering. In fact, speaking is such a herculean task for him that he tends to withdraw from his world to avoid interaction, instead retreating to his typewriter, where his words flow freely. Victor’s speech impediment is paralyzing and a constant source of humiliation for him; few people take the time or make an effort to try to understand him. Victor has also learned to create nicknames for people—in a sort of work-around to compensate for the difficulty he has pronouncing people’s actual names; unfortunately, one of the hardest names for him to pronounce is his own. The two people who seem to make the effort to talk with Victor and get to know him are “Mam” (Miss Nellie Avent), the Black maid who came to live with the family when he was five, and his best friend “Rat” (his nickname for Arthur/Art). But names aren’t the only words Victor has trouble with. The summer before Victor turns thirteen, Rat is accidentally hit in the face by a baseball and decides to spend time at a cousin’s farm, and Victor agrees to take over his paper route for the month of July. While delivering the

xxix <http://ucpsdfoundation.org/whatiscp.html>

xxx www.ada.gov

xxxi <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/hq9805.html>

xxxii <http://sharondraper.com/bookdetail.asp?id=35>

papers will be a snap, Victor dreads the possibility that he might actually have to interact with customers to collect the unpronounceable fee of "ninety-five cents." But the paper route opens a whole new world to Victor, who is forced to come out of his shell and interact with a range of people—and finds that it's not all bad! He begins to meet a diverse group of individuals (many with their own secrets), opens up and make some new friends, and gains a much-needed sense of self and community. Among the memorable characters Victor befriends on the paper route are a deaf boy and the elderly Mr. Spiro, the third person in his life who understands him, and the first to really challenge him. A dangerous encounter with a mysterious man named Ara T, an itinerant junk peddler and notorious bully, stirs up trouble that leads Victor and Mam into the seediest sections of the city, and provides Victor with important insights into the lives of the people he cares about. The author's painfully accurate (and personal) portrayal of a character with a severe stutter is sure to increase understanding about this speech impediment and to engender empathy even in those students who otherwise might be inclined to make fun of someone like Victor. The book is filled with facts about stuttering and the coping strategies that help Victor (and other stutterers like him) communicate more clearly. But Victor's story has broader appeal and message as well, as he begins to mature and redefine his relationship with his parents, think about his aspirations and hope for the future, explore his budding spirituality, and bravery in the face of adversity. The story also illustrates how our personal insecurities can hold us back, make us feel unworthy, and limit our full participation in life.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Human Rights, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Responsibility

Queen of Water, The

Laura Resau and Maria Virginia Farinango (*Authors*)
Delacorte Books for Young Readers: 2011

Virginia was born into a large indigenous family in an Andean village in Ecuador, where desperate poverty, hardship, manual labor (even for children), and a life of discrimination by the mestizo upper class are commonplace. At age seven, Virginia's parents give her to a wealthy academic mestizo couple to become their servant. Set in the 1980's, and based on author Farinango's own life, this first-person, present-tense narrative, recounts the girl's struggles and her perseverance against many odds, including the realization that she has been sold into domestic slavery. Virginia is forced to cook, clean and provide child care without pay, is locked in the family's apartment all day, and never allowed to see or communicate with her family. When, at age twelve, she manages to return to her village, the reunion harshly highlights the changes that have occurred in her identity. Ashamed of her illiterate parents, bitter that they gave her away, no longer able to tolerate the hard labor and impoverished life of her village, and unable to even communicate in her native language, Virginia is so uncertain about where she belongs that she contemplates returning to her life of enslavement. There are some difficult topics presented here: domestic slavery; physical and verbal abuse; sexual assault (she is fondled by the husband); the way different cultures devalue women and girls, depriving them of their most basic human rights; and the oppression of indigenous peoples. Students may be surprised to learn that these problems are commonplace in our current society—and likely even in their own communities and school. There are hopeful and practical messages here as well: Virginia doesn't just dream of a better life for herself, she secretly teaches herself to read, write and even performs science experiments while enslaved, and while the novel does not provide an easy resolution, she ultimately finds a way to attend school and build a more hopeful future for herself. The topic of resistance (and the forms and purpose

it takes) is an important theme for students this age to consider (and one they can relate to in their daily lives). Other topics for discussion include: a perspective on a particular cultural heritage; the potential conflicts that occur when people become isolated or disconnected from their heritage and cultural roots; the value of education; and a host of human rights issues—including the oppression of women and girls. There is a free online [teacher guide](#)^{xxxiii} that includes background information, links, lesson plan suggestions and other teaching tips (with connections to Spanish language curriculum).

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Global Citizenship, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems, Violence

Red Hot Salsa: Bilingual Poems on Being Young and Latino in the United States

Lori Marie Carlson and Oscar Hijuelos (*Authors*)

Henry Holt and Co: 2005/2010

The complete annotation for this collection of bilingual poems appears in the Grade 9-12 section. It is most appropriate for students in Grades 8-12, and should be screened for sexual and adult themes. Some selections may be read aloud with younger middle-school students.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences

Shooting Kabul

N. H. Senzai (*Author*)

Simon & Schuster/Paula Wiseman Books: 2010

In July 2001, eleven-year-old Fadi, and his family hastily flee their native Afghanistan, rather than join the repressive Taliban rule. As they reach the Pakistani border where they are to board a truck that will take them to freedom, a surprise attack by the Taliban results in chaos, and the unthinkable happens: as his older sister attends to their sick mother, and their father tries to protect the family, Fadi's six-year-old sister Mariam lets go of his hand and tragically disappears in the confusion. After several failed life-threatening attempts to find her, the stricken family is forced to depart the region as they seek asylum with relatives in San Francisco. Their adjustment is understandably overshadowed by Miriam's disappearance and they never give up their efforts to recover their missing daughter. The family becomes so consumed with her whereabouts and safety, the guilt-ridden Fadi in particular, that they can't fully appreciate the freedoms in their new home. Their difficulties adjusting and hopes for returning to Afghanistan for Miriam are dealt another blow with the terrorist attacks in the US on September 11th, 2001. While his family uses traditional means to look for Miriam (e.g. hiring private investigators, checking refugee camp registrations), Fadi leads a sort of double life as he tries to fit in a school but continues to devise all manner of impossible schemes to recover his sister. He finally finds some measure of acceptance in the photography club, which re-kindles a love of photography he first developed at home in Kabul. When a photography competition offers a grand prize photo-shoot trip with a professional photographer to (among other places) India, Fadi is desperate to win, seeing it as

xxxiii http://laili.unm.edu/outreach/common/educators-guides/2012-09_Queen-of-Water.pdf

his last opportunity to make his way back to Afghanistan to find Miriam. The ending (though contrived) is satisfying and the story ends well. The title refers to the photographs Fadi took in Kabul. The story is loosely based on the author's husband's 1979 escape from pre-Taliban Soviet-controlled Afghanistan. Obvious themes like immigration, assimilation, hope, perseverance, ways that love and family unity are expressed across cultures, along with topics like terrorism and anti-Muslim bias abound. Be sure to take discussions deeper to examine friendships that cross racial and religious lines (for both Fadi and his older sister), and to explore the use of photography to tell a story. The text includes some historical information (which at times bogs down the dialogue) as well as interesting insights into the Afghani Pukhtun culture (the Pukhtun are the largest ethnic group, comprising over 40% of the Afghan culture). An appended glossary and resources provide additional information for teachers and students.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Global Citizenship, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Activism, Social Systems, Violence

Shutting Out the Sky: Life in the Tenements of New York, 1880-1924

Deborah Hopkinson (*Author*)

Orchard Books: 2003

Oral histories, archival information, and vintage photographs provide the basis for this nonfiction book for middle-school students. The book conveys the stories about factors that spurred the great immigration and relays the struggles and successes of five immigrant children at the turn-of-the-century in New York City's Lower East Side tenements: Romanian-born teen Marcus Ravage, travels alone to the US to make a better life, only to be sent by his aunt to peddle chocolates on the street; Leonard Covello, left Italy and arrived at Ellis Island with his mother and younger brothers six years after his father arrived, and was ashamed to bring friends home (he later became a high school principal); Rose Cohen, a survivor of the tragic Triangle Shirtwaist fire; and Lithuanian immigrant Pauline Newman, who struggles to learn English as she works as a child laborer in the garment industry (and later became one of the first women organizers of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union). Perseverance, hard work and hope for a better life typify each story. It also vividly describes the immigrant's dilemma—of giving up their own customs and language in an effort to fit in and assimilate. It is interesting for students to learn about how children their own ages coped, helped their families, and even survived on their own, and to consider how that compares to the struggles of today's immigrants—and whether they have the same opportunities for success. Although this book is useful as a resource for projects, it is also a fascinating read that can lead students to explore their own ethnic and cultural roots, and family histories.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Global Citizenship, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Serving the Community, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems

This Child, Every Child: A Book About the World's Children

David J Smith (*Author*), Shelagh Armstrong (*Illustrator*)

Kids Can Press: 2011

A complete annotation of this book of statistics for students appears in the Grade 3-5 section. Appropriate for students in Grades 4-8, it provides a view of the world's children that takes them beyond their own lives and experiences and includes ideas for projects, website and print resources that encourage students' involvement in making changes.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Gender Issues, Global Citizenship, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Respecting Differences, Serving the Community, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems, Team-Building, Violence

Three Questions, The

Leo Tolstoy (*Author*)

<http://www.online-literature.com/tolstoy/2736>

This classic Tolstoy fable (first published in the late 1800's) tells the story of a king who decides that he will never fail if he knows the answer to three basic questions: When is the best time to do each thing?; Who is most important to know/work with?; and What is the most important thing to do at all times? The educated men he consults all give him different answers, so he seeks the counsel of a wise hermit (but must disguise himself as a pauper to gain access to the man). There is a lot to examine here: e.g. Why do you think Tolstoy wrote this story? Why did he write the story about a king instead of a commoner? How would this have been different if the king came as himself? Do you think the hermit knew the king's true identity? Was the king a good person? Do you think these questions lead to success—what would you ask? and What role do power and privilege play in this story? Both the questions and the answers can be used to provoke discussion among students about a host of topics from the practical (e.g. Who influences them in their lives?, Who do they go to for advice?, How do they decide if they got good advice?, How do they decide how to treat others and create their own code of ethics?), to the philosophical or spiritual (e.g. How do we decide what is the "right thing" to do?, How do we live in the present?, How can we live mindfully?), to the political and ethical (e.g. Who has the right to decide what is best for someone else?, Do you think female leaders have/would make different kinds of decisions than their male counterparts?, How do you make moral and ethical choices and evaluate your decisions?). Also available in free audio formats on [YouTube](#)^{xxxiv}, students can compare Tolstoy's original short story with a loosely [retold picture-book](#)^{xxxv} version by John Muth (Scholastic 2002).

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Global Citizenship, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Serving the Community, Social Responsibility & Activism

xxxiv <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cxA4-2ylqgc>

xxxv <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5pOYGjjvRc>

Touch Blue

Cynthia Lord (*Author*)

Scholastic Press: 2010

“Touch Blue and your wish will come true.” Eleven year old Tess Brooks’ life revolves around superstition and good luck omens. Things don’t look good when the state of Maine plans to shut down her island’s schoolhouse because there aren’t enough students, and since Tess’ mom is the teacher, her family will be forced to move to the mainland if the town can’t find a way to boost student enrollment (ruining Tess’ dream of becoming a fisherman). The resourceful islanders decide that if several families take in foster children, it will boost enrollment enough that the school can remain open. Tess’ family opens their home to Aaron, a thirteen-year-old trumpet player who has been bounced from one foster home to another. While Tess imagines an orphan like the contemplative Anne of Green Gables, the reality of life with Aaron is quite different. Not only does Aaron have red hair (which Tess considers bad luck), but Aaron hates the island and can’t wait to get away (which would jeopardize Tess’ dreams by threatening enrollment at the school). Aaron is silent, distant, and (understandably) moody; though he is a skillful musician, he is tormented by his past and the loss of his mother. This book is both humorous and thoughtful and it tackles topics like family, what it’s like to be a foster child, loss, what it means to be a foster parent, emotional courage, what it means to belong, luck, and how fortunate we are when find a place to belong. The plot includes a rather stereotypic bully character (which should be a topic of discussion for the class), but the value of this book (on many middle school summer reading lists) is that it highlights the anguish and loss foster children routinely experience and also brings into question the islanders’ motivations for becoming foster parents (e.g. What qualifications should people have to become a foster parent? Do you think the islanders understood the commitment they were making? Was it fair to kids like Aaron—should they have had some say in the matter? What do you think Tess learned from this process? How do you think this story would have been different if Tess and Aaron’s roles had been reversed?). The ending is hopeful—probe students to find out whether they feel the it was realistic and whether they know people like Tess or Aaron and what motivates them?

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes , Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Serving the Community, Social Systems

Touching Spirit Bear

Ben Mikaelson (*Author*)

HarperCollins: 2002

Cole Matthews is an angry, arrogant, defiant teen who blames everyone else for his troubles. He bullies others and is well-known as a troublemaker for his outbursts and aggressive physical behavior. In retaliation for “snitching,” Cole violently assaults Peter, another ninth-grader, leaving him severely injured and brain damaged. As a result, Cole faces jail time. Instead, his Tlingit Indian parole officer proposes an alternative called Circle Justice, based on Native American traditions, in which victim, offender, and community all work together to find a healing solution. Because of Cole’s history of “last chances”, the Circle (council) decides he would benefit from a one-year banishment to a remote Alaskan island—to keep him from harming others and offering him an opportunity for self-reflection and spiritual growth surviving on his own in nature. Cole chooses the banishment, to avoid prison and because he thinks he will have an opportunity to escape. But he’s mistaken. Alone on the island, he promptly burns his shelter and supplies and his arrogance results in his being seriously mauled by a rare

white bear (known as a “spirit bear”) and left for dead. Near death, he is rescued by members of the Circle who had come to check on him and his subsequent six-month hospitalization and recovery are marked by serious self-reflection about troubled history (which includes alcoholic and abusive parents), his victim, and the roots of his violent anger. Though the reasons for Cole’s destructive nature are revealed, they are not offered up as excuses for his behavior. As the book ends, Cole and his victim, who is now suffering from permanent brain damage and suicidal thoughts, return to the island together to complete a series of healing rituals. Questions to ask students include: What ways do you think Cole has truly changed—and in what ways he has stayed the same? Do you think his new outlook will result in permanent changes in his life and behavior (i.e. has the cycle of violence been broken)? Do you believe Cole is simply “playing Indian” when he participates in rituals? What do you think will happen when Cole and Peter return from the island? While Circle Justice (a restorative practice) is a Native American tradition used to heal criminal behavior, the author takes some liberties with specific details of Tlingit and Native American cultural practices (i.e., the Author’s Note specifically states banishment is not a traditional custom or part of Circle Justice practices). This is currently the only student fiction available that explores restorative concepts—a topic worth discussing with students, along with the author’s adaptations of traditional customs and how that might be perceived by Native peoples. However, this book will appeal to students who like survival/adventure stories, as well as those whose personal struggles are similar to Cole’s. Students may be interested in learning more about Native American spiritual beliefs, customs, and restorative practices and older students may weigh in on whether they think Cole adopted this new belief system. While this book does not rise to the level of great literature, it claims to support Common Core State Standards. An free on-line [study guide](#)^{xxxvi} (which was not reviewed) is available for teachers and students can be encouraged to learn more about the actual [Tlingit](#) culture in Alaska.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Serving the Community, Social Responsibility, Social Systems, Team-Building, Violence

Tree Girl

Ben Mikaelson (*Author*)

HarperTeen: 2005

In her remote village in the heart of Guatemala, fourteen-year-old Gabriela “Gabi” Flores (Laj Ali Re Jayub in her native Quiché language) is known as “Tree Girl” due to her penchant for retreating high into the tree tops to get an eagle’s-eye view of the world around her. On one of those days, this habit saves her life: she watches in horror as her family and entire village are brutally massacred by soldiers. This disturbing novel is set in the 1980’s during Guatemala’s civil war, when government-sponsored Death Squads committed genocide against the Mayan people (considered communist sympathizers who threatened the fascist regime). Told in first-person narrative, the story recounts the graphic details of atrocities committed as Gabi searches for her youngest sister in the throngs of refugees struggling to reach the perceived safety of refugee camps along the Mexican border. On a daily basis, the group faces hunger, thirst, continued danger from both government troops and guerrillas, and more atrocities along

xxxvi <http://www.gradesaver.com/touching-spirit-bear/study-guide/section8>

xxxvii <http://www.alaskanative.net/en/main-nav/education-and-programs/cultures-of-alaska/eyak-tlingit-haida-and-tsimshian>

the way. Once Gabi arrives at the camp, her concern for others (caring for two elderly women and her surviving sister) help her to recover from her experiences, and she eventually founds a school. This book claims to be based on the true story of the real (but anonymous) “Tree Girl,” who survived the genocide of 200,000 Mayans in the 1980’s. Countless well-documented human rights abuses and atrocities were promoted by military dictator E. Ríos Montt (whose regime was bolstered in part by US funding and training of the Guatemalan military). This book is recommended as by Common Core State Standards for world history (regarding genocide). While the story does not describe the most horrific abuses that actually took place, teachers will want to screen it carefully for disturbing content and allow ample time for students to process the reading, which includes descriptions of mass murder, beatings, torture, rape, killing of children, and refugee hardships. That said, it also describes one girl’s path to find meaning out of her experiences and her healing as a survivor. The author’s notes provide some background and perspective that teachers may want to read first in preparation for using the book with students. It is recommended that this book be supplemented with additional information about the Mayan culture, historic tensions between the Spanish and indigenous peoples, aspects of the war and human rights violations, and how US policies and consumerism are part of a global economy that exacerbates situations such as those that transpired throughout Central and South America (e.g., United Fruit Company, School of Americas). Other themes include survivor’s guilt, how people deal with post-traumatic stress, and go on to make meaningful lives after surviving tragedy. The novel is appropriate for Grades 7-12; the audio book (2010) is recommended for high school only, due to its intensity.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Feelings, Global Citizenship, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems, Violence

Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963, The

Christopher Paul Curtis (*Author*)

Yearling: 1997/2007

In the summer of 1963, ten-year-old Kenny Watson and his hard-working middle-class Black family pile into their brand new car to visit Grandma in Birmingham, AL—with hopes that a summer with the matriarch will straighten out Kenny’s troubled thirteen-year-old gang-member brother Byron. Narrated by the naive and humorous Kenny, this book blends the fictional account of his family with actual events of that violent summer. The family carefully prepares for the trip—knowing they will face bias and won’t be able to count on finding places to stay or eat once they cross into the segregated South. Once they do arrive, the presence of family and pace of life have the positive effect on the children their parents hoped for. Until the terrible Sunday when Grandma’s church (the local Sixteenth Avenue Baptist Church) is bombed, with four little girls inside. A terrified Kenny runs to look for his little sister, and the event causes him to withdraw emotionally. Middle-school students will enjoy this book, which can be linked to discussions about the historical events and segregation of the time. This twentieth anniversary edition includes a special letter from the author and an introduction by noted educator Dr. Pauletta Bracy. The book is also available as a Hallmark Channel Original Movie (not reviewed) and a teacher guide (not reviewed) by Debra Housel (2002). An [historical timeline](http://afroamhistory.about.com/od/civilrightsstruggle1/a/timeline1960_2.htm)^{xxxviii} is available online:

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^{xxxviii} http://afroamhistory.about.com/od/civilrightsstruggle1/a/timeline1960_2.htm.

We Are the Ship

Kadir Nelson (*Author, Illustrator*)

Hyperion/Jump At The Sun: 2008

The full annotation of this book appears in the Grades 3-5 section. This dense picture book about the history of baseball's Negro Leagues is sure to engage reluctant readers. This book can be linked to the historical themes as well as to highlight positive aspects of determination, ambition, sportsmanship, perseverance and dedication. Rube Foster's quote (on which the title is based) is also a great catalyst for a student writing project about working together and taking a leadership role in creating positive change.

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What Will Happen to Me?: Every night, approximately three million children go to bed with a parent in prison or jail. Here are their thoughts and stories.

Howard Zehr (*Author, Photographer*), Lorraine S. Amstutz (*Author*)

Good Books: 2010

Gathered by two nationally recognized experts in the practice of restorative justice, the first part of this book of photographs and thirty short essays about the personal experiences of US children who have at least one parent in prison. Each sobering and emotional piece is written in the students' own words and includes their questions, personal thoughts and reflections about what they want others to know about them and their parents; their hopes for the future; and what supports they need to move forward. Several are written by grandparents caring for the children of incarcerated parents. Selected essays can be read aloud to students or used to spark small group discussion. The second part includes resource materials for adults (this title is also listed in the *Adult Resources* section below) and includes topics such as: Ten Questions Often Asked by Children; Dealing with Emotions (i.e., grief/loss, shame/stigma, anger and isolation); Resources for "Staying in Touch;" Finding Moments of Celebration; Adjusting to a Parent's Return: Self-Care for Family Caregivers; Suggestions for Third-Party Caregivers; and The Children's Bill of Rights. This part of the book could potentially serve as student research material. Since the essays do not include facts about the length of a parent's incarceration or the severity of their sentence, be sure to allow time for students to consider how those details might make a difference in the individual's stories and outcomes. Used with students whose parents are incarcerated, this book can help them understand they are not alone or support their efforts to interpret and express their own feelings. It can also be used to consider ways restorative practices might be applicable to promote, repair or improve family relationships. For other students, selected essays and information can be used to foster empathy and understanding about these issues—again, be sure to have them consider ways that the severity and length of the sentence might affect each situation; to facilitate discussion about the impact of random acts of violence they have personally experienced; or those in current events. For any students, this resource could stimulate or extend discussions about our criminal justice and penal systems, the impact of incarceration on families of convicted individuals as well as those of victims, the role of practices such as mediation and restorative justice (and how they can be used in a various broad contexts), the role that support and resources have in preventing recidivism and multigenerational violence.

The [UN Rights of the Child](#)^{xxxix} is a possible supplemental resource material for these discussions. Students might also debate the authors' thesis that this social problem, which they assert affects approximately three million children, and the outcome of their lives, affects all of us; or, to research the links between poverty, race and crime/incarceration.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Violence

When My Name Was Keoko

Linda Sue Park (*Author*)

Clarion Books: 2002

In the early 1940's, ten-year-old Sun-hee Kim and her thirteen-year-old brother, Tae-yul, live with their parents in Japanese-occupied Korea. The Japanese government requires that they study and speak only the Japanese language and history; they are prohibited from using their own language or displaying the Korean flag. In fact, all aspects of their Korean culture are forbidden—even their names. Told in alternating first-person chapters, the siblings describe the difficulties of living under the strict fascist regime. Forced to convert their names to Japanese, Sun-hee, renamed Keoko, struggles to reconcile her Korean home life with her Japanese school and friends; Tae-yul, now Nobuo, tries to channel his growing anger in acceptable ways. The shifting narration also highlights the differences between gender roles in Korean (and Japanese) society. This well-researched historical novel takes place between 1940-1945. As the years progress, each family member struggles to maintain their identities, individuality and dignity against increasing oppression: Mr. Kim is carefully subversive in selecting his family's new names; Sun-hee keeps a journal after being told it is a forbidden activity; Tae-yul develops a passion for flying; and their beloved uncle prints materials for the underground Korean resistance. When World War II does come to Korea, the Japanese expect their Korean subjects to fight on their side. When Sun-hee inadvertently puts her uncle's activities and life in danger, she sets in motion a chain of events that shock the family: Tae-yul enlists as a pilot in the Japanese army, in an attempt to deflect suspicion away from their uncle. As the family anxiously awaits news from Tae-yul (who is chosen to be a kamikaze), the war ends, and the family's destiny—and that of their country—hangs in the balance. Inspired by the author's own family history, living in South Korea during the Japanese occupation, the author's note provides additional information about the fate of many Korean families after the WWII, along with a student bibliography. This novel provides information about a piece of history often unfamiliar to American students and provides an introduction to talk about topics relevant to students' experiences today: including the difficulties of maintaining cultural identity, what it is like to be an immigrant or live under an oppressive government, what it's like waiting to hear from family-members away at war, and the effects of gender-role stereotypes today.

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xxxix <http://www.unicef.org/rightsite/files/uncrcchilddfrientlylanguage.pdf>

Wonder

R.J. Palacio (*Author*)

Knopf Books for Young Readers: 2012

"I won't describe what I look like. Whatever you're thinking, it's probably worse." are the intriguing first lines of this book. August Pullman was born with such severe congenital facial deformities that, up until now, he has been home-schooled. But he will be starting 5th grade in a private mainstream school—something his parents struggled to agree on. Though he longs to be treated as an ordinary kid, Auggie's new classmates have varying degrees of difficulty coping with his unusual appearance, and treat him accordingly. The chapters begin with Auggie's excitement and point of view, but then alternate between the voices of several of his classmates (some of whom have been unwillingly handpicked by the well-meaning principal to ease Auggie's transition into school), his sister, her boyfriend, and others. These perspectives ultimately converge to convey a story about bullying and exclusion, courage, friendship, and a community's struggle to show understanding, compassion and acceptance, and the freedom to be yourself. All the dialogues ring true (though a few of Auggie's expressions seem jarringly odd and "old fashioned") and the adults are (for a change) mostly portrayed in a positive light (in particular, Auggie's endearing teacher, Mr. Browne, with his precepts to live by). Students will find this book engaging and will no doubt want to learn more about the facial deformity that Auggie was born with and decide what their own reactions might (or have been to others with obvious physical deformities). Encouraging students to role-play/act out the different character roles gives them a chance to understand the different points of view, understand motivations for different character's behavior, and problem-solve prosocial responses that they can use in real-life situations. Mr. Browne's precepts provide inspiration for writing or discussion about personal values, kindness, hopefulness, friendship, resilience, and more. This book is also currently available in an audio CD format. Several other resources of interest are a "Join the conversation" Twitter page (#thewonderofwonder) and a separate book of Mr. Browne's precepts (not reviewed), expected to be released later in 2014 titled 365 Days of Wonder: Mr. Browne's Book of Precepts (Knopf Books for Young Readers: 2014) which will consist of 365 positive principles to live by drawn from popular songs, children's books, inscriptions on Egyptian tombstones, and fortune cookies interspersed with letters and emails from characters who appeared in Wonder. Students may also want to listen to Natalie Merchant's song *Wonder*, honoring a child with a disability, and relate her message to the book; or read the July 2014 [interview](#)^{xl} with the author where she shares the personal event (and her feelings) that inspired her to write this book:

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Team-Building

^{xl} <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/authorinterviews/9086974/Interview-with-RJ-Palacio-author-of-Wonder.html>

"I used to walk to school with my nose buried in a book."
Coolio (Artis Leon Ivey Jr., Rapper and Chef)

A Civil Action

Jonathan Harr (*Author*)
Vintage: 1996

This nonfiction book reads like a novel: A flashy and idealistic young lawyer files a class action suit against two corporate giants, Beatrice Foods and W.R. Grace, for allegedly polluting the water in the working-class Boston suburb of Woburn, MA. The leukemia and cancer deaths of several young children and ailments of other residents trigger an epic courtroom showdown when the two corporations stand accused of secretly dumping known cancer-causing solvents into the water supply, and then covering it up. Representing eight of the bereaved parents, lawyer Jan Schlichtman hoped to win a record millions of dollars for each family and send a message to corporate America that they needed to conduct their businesses in more ethical ways. Justice proved much more elusive as the duplicitous deep-pocket corporations fought and out-manuevered Schlichtman and the families: the case against Beatrice was thrown out and though an \$8 million dollar settlement was finally reached with Grace, it was not enough to even cover the costs of the case. Each family received only a token amount and Schlichtman was bankrupted and ultimately considered himself a failure. Though justice is to this day elusive against the greed of the two corporations, Schlichtman's energy and determination showed that one man can ultimately make a difference. Also available in e-book and DVD (movie) formats. The book raises issues of trust, fairness, problems with the justice system; the actions of the corporate heads and lawyers can be related to bullying and oppression and issues of power and privilege associated with social class.

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A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier

Ishmael Beah (*Author*)
Sarah Crichton Books: 2008

Children (often propelled by drugs) have become today's soldiers of choice in many conflicts worldwide; at the time this book was written, it estimated that there were over 300,000 child soldiers in fifty conflicts globally. Ishmael Beah, twenty-five at the time this memoir was published, was one of them. In the 1990s, at the age of twelve, Beah fled attacking rebels during the civil war in his home in Sierra Leone, wandering alone and homeless for months across the war-torn landscape. By thirteen, he had been abducted and recruited by the government army, to a life dominated by sadistic sociopaths and cocaine meant to make the young soldiers compliant, aggressive and out of touch with morality as they engaged in indiscriminate slaughter. Beah quickly found himself capable of unspeakable acts, killing without remorse until, at the age of fifteen, he was rescued and brought to a rehabilitation center sponsored by UNICEF and partnering NGOs. Beah subsequently became a spokesman for the center's work after his "repatriation" to civilian life in the capital, where he lived with his family and a distant uncle until war finally engulfed the city, sending the seventeen-year-old youth fleeing again, this time to the US, where he graduated from Oberlin College. He continues to live in the US and is now a member of the Human Rights Watch Children's Rights Division Advisory Committee. Student query can include: What happened to turn a gentle boy who loved American hip-hop music and dance into a killing machine? How does one stop after the war has ended and find some measure of normalcy? And how does someone deal with the feelings and memories of

their actions? Like many memoirs, this one is considered controversial because some of the facts and timelines provided by the young author don't all square up; in addition, his depiction of extremely graphic content and facts seem to be relayed without affect, leaving readers to wonder whether he really has healed or come to grips with his experiences. But while journalists have interviewed child soldiers in an effort to tell their stories, there has not been a first-person account from any until this one. In addition to the questions raised above, students can also be encouraged to look at the different ways that gender plays a role in war: while boys and are forced to become soldiers, women and girls are pressed into domestic or sexual slavery to satisfy soldiers needs.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Global Citizenship, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Social Responsibility & Activism, Violence

A Strange and Bitter Fruit

Barry Davis (*Author*)

Kindle: 2010

Based on the actual life of Thomas 'Tee' Powell of SC, the central themes of this historical fiction (racism, revenge and the cycle of violence) are relevant to today's readers. Born into slavery, fifteen-year-old Tee witnesses the brutal lynching of his entire family (including his three-year-old sister) by the KKK, who wanted to set an example for Black residents that former slaves were no longer welcome to vote. (The book title is a reference to a song where swollen, swinging lynched bodies are compared to "strange fruit"). Tee manages to escape from the men, but is consumed by guilt and anger—and the need for revenge against everyone who took part in the killings. After a disastrous trip to Tallahassee causes the lead Klansmen to ramp up their efforts to hunt Tee down, he joins the Army and ends up in a remote outpost on the edge of South Dakota's Black Hills. There, he becomes an accomplished frontier soldier, accepts responsibility for his life, and becomes one of the few people interested in understanding and making peace with the territory's indigenous people. Tee regularly encounters and resists racism in the ranks and from commanding officers, who would just as soon kill all people of all colors (in or out of the Army). After six years, he is again confronted by his past when the two remaining Klansmen, one now a US Senator, arrive at the Tee's fort to sign a bogus treaty with the local tribes. Tee tells the tribal leaders about the true terms of the treaty, and they attack, giving Tee the opportunity for long-awaited revenge. Unfortunately, his plan fails when his erstwhile targets recognize him—and many innocent people die as a result. The story continues: Tee goes into hiding, marries, and has two children. Years later, the vendetta results in the killing of his young daughter, who is caught in the crossfire. Despairing, Tee decides the cycle of violence must end; he doesn't know his son, a witness to the killing, has decided to finish the battle his father started—with tragic results. Themes include: revenge and its costs and consequences, violence, racism, and justice. It raises questions about whether there are limits to revenge, whether retaliation is ever just, what retaliation accomplishes, whether there is a difference between physical violence and psychological abuse/marginalization, along with other ethical questions. The author's notes draw parallels between Tee's actions and US responses to terrorism, or US historical responses to Native Americans and slaves. Parallels may also be drawn to gang violence and ethnic tensions in current events.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems, Violence

Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian, The

Sherman Alexie (*Author*), Ellen Forney (*Illustrator*)

Little, Brown Books for Young Readers: 2009

This semi-autobiographical novel explores life on a Spokane WA Indian reservation, as seen through the eyes of Arnold Spirit, Jr. A bright but “dorky-looking” fourteen-year-old who likes to play basketball and is a burgeoning artist, “Junior” has many cards stacked against him: he was born with hydrocephalus (“water on the brain”), he stutters, his parents are alcoholics, he lives in the stultifying poverty of the reservation, and he is stuck in a school that does not challenge him and where he is constantly bullied. When a teacher begs Junior to strive for more and helps him transfer to a rich (White) private school off the reservation, Junior expects the worse. To his surprise, he soon finds himself making friends and even joins the basketball team. But back on the reservation, Junior finds his old classmates now consider him an outcast, causing him to question his personal, community, and tribal identity and to grapple with where he fits in. His daily struggles with the life on the impoverished, alcohol-mired reservation go from bad to worse when Junior’s grandmother, dog and older sister all die tragically and his family life crumbles. But Junior responds to these ordeals with resilience, optimism, and wry humor. His determination to both improve himself and overcome poverty, despite the handicaps of birth, circumstances, and race, delivers a positive message in a low-key manner. There are many ideas that can be used to generate discussion. Reluctant readers will enjoy the illustrations (Junior’s cartoons) and can use them to construct their own interpretations of the story. Teachers will want to screen this text carefully for content that might be considered objectionable: including language (e.g. Junior’s use of profanity is pretty authentic, though not “desirable,” and includes a range of obscenities); illegal behavior (e.g. rule-breaking, stealing and drinking are “normalized”—but this is something that can be readily addressed in class discussions); and sexual content. While not classic literature, this novel captures a difficult life in a way that teens will relate to: because Junior has hope doesn't mean his life isn't filled with crushing poverty, hardship or devastating sadness. In spite of those things, he chooses to live a life of opportunity and the possibility of change—he chooses not to give in to despair in spite of seemingly insurmountable odds. One thing that sustains Junior is making lists of his favorite things (Chapter 24). Ask students to create their own Hope Lists—what things bring them the most joy in life? The author’s use of the word ‘Indian’ to describe and refer to himself and characters, as well as other slang (e.g. ‘rez’) provides an opportunity to talk about racial and ethnic identity and which words used to define it are acceptable or offensive (and under what circumstances).

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Systems

Almost Home: Helping Kids Move from Homelessness to Hope

Kevin Ryan and Tina Kelley (*Authors*)

Wiley: 2012

An estimated 1.6 million young people in the United States and Canada run away or are kicked out of their homes each year. This book offers an inside-view of the lives of six of those often-invisible teens. Told in first person narratives and accompanied by many photographs, the interviews follow their respective journeys from hopelessness, abuse, and life on the streets, to futures filled with promise (though tenuous for some). These moving stories share details of each teen’s life before—and since—coming to a Covenant House (a faith-based group that is the largest charity serving homeless and runaway youth in North America), and alternates between the devastating details that brought them there, to the inspiring progress they have made to craft new lives and find places they can call home. The six portraits cover

topics such drug addiction, family violence, prostitution, rejection based on sexual orientation, teen parenthood, and aging out of foster care into a future with limited skills and no support systems. The stories include the son of a crack addict who fights his own drug addiction; a teen mother trying to create a new life; a young man abandoned and abused by his adoptive parents (who proudly returns to Covenant House to cook and serve a gourmet meal); another, bearing physical scars, walks the halls as an at-risk coordinator for a high school; and in the epilogue, we learn that a young woman who had survived drug addiction and prostitution has been accepted to college to study juvenile justice, one teen has gone onto become a college football player and counsels at-risk adolescents, and another becomes a state kickboxing champion. Authored by Covenant house president (Ryan) and a former journalist for the *New York Times* (Kelley), this book also includes statistics, information about the root causes of homelessness among young people, policy recommendations to address them, firsthand experiences mentoring and working with homeless and troubled youth, and practical suggestions on how to get involved (including action steps readers can take to fight youth homelessness and assist individual homeless young people). Basic themes like shelter, safety, and hope are at the crux of this book, but other discussion topics include: human trafficking, the shortcomings of the foster care system, the financial costs of not caring for homeless youth, and suggestions and resources for mentoring, helping teen parents, and supporting LGBTQ youth. There are a lot of statistics included throughout, and teachers may feel it is more appropriate to select some stories to read aloud (to generate specific topic-based class discussions) or to use for small-group projects.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Serving the Community, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems, Violence

Autobiography of Malcom X

Malcom X (*Author*) as told to Alex Haley and Atallah Shabbaz (*Authors*)

Ballantine Books: 1987

Malcolm X's autobiography is considered one of the most influential books of the twentieth century and is consistently listed as a "book everyone should read." Written by Alex Haley, this memoir/ autobiography is based on extensive audiotaped interviews with the complex Malcom, just prior to his assassination in 1965. Born Malcom Little in 1925, he had a traumatic childhood plagued by racism (his father was shot and killed when Malcom was just six, and his mother was institutionalized for mental illness when he was barely a teenager). He spent many of his subsequent years in a series of foster homes and was both a drug dealer and pimp. At age twenty, his bitter self-destructive ways landed him in jail for petty crimes. In prison, he began a journey of self discovery, spiritual awakening, and transformation into an intelligent, articulate and militant political activist. For a dozen years until his assassination in 1965, he was known for his controversial views about Black supremacy and criticism of the Civil Rights Movement's goals of integration. While he openly challenged the multiracial non-violent approach of Martin Luther King, Jr., the two men held many common beliefs that a strong spiritual foundation and self-respect provided a path to freedom. His analysis of White privilege and racism continue to be relevant today. One poignant moment in this book is when he tells coauthor Haley, "People don't realize how a man's whole life can be changed by one book." That quote can be used as to facilitate a student writing assignment about what books they find transformative or to think about why Malcom was so concerned about getting his own story "right." Malcom X was a charismatic, much-maligned, and often misunderstood individual; one of the take-away messages for students is how he transformed his life and continued to evaluate and refine his views and personal beliefs (moving away from anger and bitterness in his quest for personal growth and spiritual enlightenment). An important teaching goal would be to help students move past some of

the provocative angry rhetoric that characterized his early teaching to look at ways his views reflected what he saw as the problems of the society around him and how that gradually evolved. This book is also useful to explore the links between gender, poverty, race and outcomes such as discrimination and violence. If possible, look for the earlier unedited version of the book (published in 1965) which contains photographs, and epilogue about his assassination (and contributions by actor Ossie Davis)

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Respecting Differences, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems, Team-Building, Violence

Beloved

Toni Morrison (*Author*)

Alfred A. Knopf: 2006

Born a slave on a Kentucky farm ironically named “Sweet Home,” Sethe and her four children successfully escape her former master; she gives birth as she flees, before finally finding refuge at the home of her mother-in-law. A month later, she panics at the sight of her cruel slave-owner's hat and runs to hide in a woodshed with her children. There she makes a decision that will change her life. She finally settles in a small Ohio town, but her spiritual demons literally follow her: eighteen years later, Sethe is still not free and her memories are personified by the angry, destructive ghost of her murdered baby. Though troublesome, Sethe finds the haunting by her infant (known only by her tombstone epitaph: “Beloved”) strangely comforting. When another former Sweet Home slave, a friend of her long-missing husband, moves in, Sethe slowly reveals her past as the two share their stories of the events leading up to their escapes. The author's graphic description of the many horrors of slavery (e.g. rapes, beatings, murders, torture, mutilations, and the sacrifices slaves made to survive) makes them compelling and all the more painful because readers experience each tragedy through the eyes of the individual sufferer, and those forced to helplessly watch each cruelty. The horrifying circumstances of Sethe's baby's death start to make sense when a young teenager (who calls herself Beloved) moves into and takes over the household, pushing Sethe's psyche to the breaking point. While the storyline is fairly straightforward, this is a dense, complex and intense novel where scenes are presented in an apparently random order, corresponding to Sethe's recollections, but gradually reveal the horrifying chronology of her story. Students may benefit from reading it aloud and discussing it in small sections—and even creating their own timeline of events. But the powerful writing of this 1988 Pulitzer Prize-winning novel will make the extra effort to help students understand the meaning of the author's words, and her personalized depiction of slavery, worthwhile. Set after the end of the Civil War, when slaves were freed by emancipation, but still victims of random acts of violence, the book also serves as a metaphor for the legacy of slavery to explore relevant questions like: Is Sethe responsible for her past? Were other characters right to ostracize her and judge her so harshly for her decision? Or (related to more current events) Why is the leading cause of death among young, Black men murder by others of their own race? Or (going back to questions raised by Malcolm X) Should people of color work together with Whites to achieve equality, or must they do it alone? Another universal theme relevant to current events and the culture and impact of violence and war poses other questions like: To what limits will parents go to protect their own children? What circumstances would push a mother to deliberately destroy her own beloved child? At what point (and under what conditions) does the past set you free to create a brighter future? If using the film, do so only after reading the book (if at all); an electronic format of the book is available, as is an audio version narrated by the author herself.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Relationships, Social Responsibility, Social Systems, Violence

Beneath a Meth Moon

Jacqueline Woodson (*Author*)

Penguin: 2013

Still reeling from the loss of her home and her beloved mother and grandmother in Hurricane Katrina, fifteen-year-old Laurel Daneau is beginning a new life, in new school, in a new town. Things seem to be going well: she's making friends, has earned a place on the cheerleading squad, and T-Boom (the co-captain of the basketball team) is her new boyfriend. Unfortunately, T-Boom uses methamphetamines (or "moon") and when Laurel tries it, she begins a downward spiral that will affect every aspect of her life. She loves the way it erases, even if only briefly, the pain of her losses, but soon becomes alienated from her friends and family—becoming a shell of her former self. By all standards, Laurel Daneau was a good girl, with a loving family and healthy interests, and was socially adept. But emotional troubles left her adrift and vulnerable to the particular perils of this drug. Life on the streets is hard and Laurel longs to feel whole again. Her encounter with Moses, an artist who is dealing with his own losses, and her friend Kaylee help her to "write an elegy to her past...and move on" (essentially changing her story and moving out from under her addiction). The author carefully captures life in a small town with limited economic opportunities, peer pressure to use drugs, and dating relationships; she also challenges many commonly held misconceptions about teenage drug use (e.g., that addicts begin with a lesser substance, that they are troubled kids—not smart "good" ones, that they lack good parental support, that most are criminals or misfits). She also highlights the ways that the homeless, drug addicted and mentally ill are marginalized and become virtually invisible. All of these points provide potential topics of discussion with students.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems

Between Shades of Grey

Ruta Sepetys (*Author*)

Philomel books: 2011

Fifteen-year-old Lina's life is fairly typical compared to other girls she knows: she paints, draws, and has crushes on boys until one fateful night, Soviet troops storm into her home, tearing her family apart. This first novel offers an account of the forcible relocation of countless Lithuanians when Stalin's Russian army invaded the country in 1939. Separated from her father (who was arrested by Soviet secret police and sent to a prison camp), Lina, her mother, and her young brother are forced onto a crowded and filthy train and deported to a forced labor camp in the frigid wasteland of Siberia. Their days are filled with hard labor digging for beets in brutal conditions (similar to those of Nazi concentration camps) and they must fight to survive the cold, starvation, and deprivation. In hopes of sending a secret message to her father so he knows they are alive and might rescue his family, Lina undertakes the risky task of using her artistic skills to meticulously document events of their daily lives. Whether or not her plan will be possible, Lina's art gives her purpose, and helps her to retain her identity, her dignity, and her increasingly tenuous hold on hope for survival and future. The novel spans a number of years and covers 6,500 miles; Lina does survive and makes the journey to find her father. The characters of this book are very realistic—and the romantic subplot in the background provides a ray of hope for Lina's future without detracting from the main story. This will likely be a new twist on World War II history for students more familiar with the Jewish Holocaust: the Russian genocide of non-Jews, which by most estimates wiped out over one-third of the population of the Baltic states. The statistics presented in this novel continue to be denied by many (including the Soviet government)—made possible in part because the Soviets did not keep records as meticulously as the

Nazi's documented atrocities. It is interesting to note that the author is the daughter of a Lithuanian refugee. Students who like this book may be interested in reading Esther Hautzig's The Endless Steppe (Harper Collins: 1995).

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Global Citizenship, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Social Systems, Violence

Beyond Katrina: A Meditation on the Mississippi Gulf Coast

Natasha Trethewey (*Author*)

University of Georgia Press: 2010

The author (the 2012-2014 US Poet Laureate) uses a combination of poetry, prose, correspondence and photographs in this short book to provide her personal insights about life, and struggles to reconstruct the Mississippi coast post-Katrina. Some students may need support following the non-linear/non chronological book—which reads more like a diary, and includes the author's own outlook along with observations by other survivors. The descriptive language, metaphors, interesting anecdotes and characters tell the story of a community's struggle to rebuild, with faith and a promise of help that never came. Even several years after the storm, the author's hometown of Gulfport was still suffering from the devastation. The author shares her own memories and those of others—making the point that some losses can only be recaptured or held by memories. This book focuses more on the sociological and psychological obstacles that followed the storm than the actual physical damage. One clear theme is that "life moves on" and the author recounts the many different ways tragedy affects peoples outlooks, personalities, and what they do to recover. It includes themes about home, and her brother's drug use and subsequent incarceration (results of his failed efforts to cope with the loss and destabilization the storm caused in his life). The author (who is Biracial) touches on issues that can help students explore how racism and social class had an impact on disaster-relief efforts, as well as how they might have contributed to the authors' own outlook and the experiences of those close to her.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings

Black & White

Paul Volponi (*Author*)

Speak: 2006

Marcus and Eddie, both high school seniors and stars on their school basketball team, claim they have moved past the racial barriers common in their neighborhood and Long Island City High School to become best friends ("...almost like blood brothers"). Marcus (who is Black, and the smarter, more cautious of the pair) and Eddie (who is White, comes from a family with more financial resources, and is more arrogant and a bigger risk-taker) are known at school as "Black & White." Their stories unfold in alternating chapters that give readers insights into their individual points of view. The pair watch each other's backs, on and off the court, and are inseparable: they jointly consider various college scholarships, plan to attend the same city college, and even plan to "go pro" together. But being teenage boys who think they are invincible, they make some incredibly poor choices. Instead of looking for part-time jobs that they consider demeaning or that would interfere with their basketball schedules, they risk everything by breaking into cars and stealing things just to get some extra spending money (to buy the latest basketball shoes). In spite of Marcus' hesitation about continuing (and the fact that Eddie insists on carrying a gun), the pair pulls off a third job. But they are caught, and Eddie shoots and seriously wounds the man who confronted

them. In the terrifying days that follow, the boys learn their victim has died, identifying Marcus as one of the perpetrators; they wait for the police to find and arrest them both (since they are inseparable). Marcus, and eventually, Eddie are both arrested, but the police don't have enough evidence to convict Eddie as the shooter without Marcus' testimony. Ultimately, their racial differences result in disparate treatment of each boy, and their "code of honor" prevents "snitching" on each other; but, it also keeps them from doing the right thing. Their pledge of friendship is tested when Marcus is convicted but Eddie only remains a suspect. Their relationship is finally pushed to the brink when Marcus is jailed, and Eddie goes free. While the language includes profanity and harsh racial epithets, the authentic voices, language and plot will ring true for students from a range of backgrounds. The story's layered moral ambiguities, the heartbreaking choices and ending will surely engage readers and generate a lot of worthwhile discussion about the choices the boys made. Topics include: racial bias and stereotyping, snitching, code of honor, cheating, legal justice and inequality, the importance of making thoughtful decisions, peer pressure (including gender expectations placed on boys), elements of "character," loyalty, friendship, fairness, and taking responsibility. The author has a background teaching teens at Rikers Island Correctional facility and has a [webpage](#)^{xli} that offers background and insights about the book:

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Social Responsibility, Violence

Book of Other People, The

Zadie Smith (*Editor*)

Penguin Books: 2008

The premise of this collection of essays and short stories is simple: author Zadie Smith asked twenty two established and up-and-coming authors from the US, UK, Haiti, Latin America and beyond to "make somebody up." While somewhat of a mixed bag, each piece illustrates how different authors from diverse cultures and perspectives create and depict characters. The stories, as well as the varied points of view, reveal something of the authors themselves and the world around us—a topic worthy of discussion among students. About half of these contributions are notable and accessible to most teens—in particular, those by Vendela Vida (*Soliel*), David Mitchell (*Judith Castle*), Dave Eggers (*Theo*), Daniel Clowes (*Justin M. Damiano*), Edwidge Danticat (*Lélé*), Nick Hornsby (*J. Johnson*), ZZ Packer (*Gideon*), Zadie Smith (*Hanwell Sr*), Aleksandar Hemon (*The Liar*), Heidi Julavits (*Judge Gladys Parks-Schultz*), Miranda July (*Roy Spivey*), and A. M. Homes (*Cindy Stubenstock*)—others are likely to require a more sophisticated and broader experience with literature. Students may be interested in reading more by authors they like and learning about the charity that benefits from sales of this book: the Brooklyn-based "826 New York" which is dedicated to helping children develop creative writing skills.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Responsibility

^{xli} http://www.paulvolponibooks.com/Black_White_Notes.htm

Book Thief, The

Markus Zusak (*Author*)

Alfred A. Knopf: 2007

Originally published in Australia, this unusual World War II story takes place in Nazi Germany in 1939. It is not a Holocaust story in the familiar sense, but instead offers a glimpse into what life for many “typical” Germans was like under Nazi rule. Another unusual twist is that the omniscient narrator is Death—who frequently foreshadows events and is uniquely presented as a caring and exhausted character overwhelmed by the growing numbers of souls he has to collect (from people who are sick or old, to soldiers on battlefields, then gassed Jews, and civilians killed in bombings). Obsessed with Liesel Meminger, but unable to bring himself to “take her,” Death stalks her from the time she is nine, when her mother (a Communist) is forced to give up her two children upon her arrest. As the children are en route to be cared for by foster parents, Liesel’s brother dies and Death carries him away while his body is buried alongside of the tracks. It is at her brother’s graveside that Liesel steals her first book—The Gravedigger’s Handbook—although she has not yet learned to read. Liesel arrives distraught at the home of Hans and Rosa Hubermann, her new foster family in the working-class neighborhood of Molching, Germany, on the outskirts of Munich. Plagued by regular nightmares about her brother’s death, gentle Hans lulls her to sleep by reading from the bizarre book. Surrounded by tough kids, quirky neighbors, and hard-working parents of Molching, Liesel gradually adjusts to her new surroundings and the town’s well-defined class structure. She helps Rosa with her laundry business and becomes particularly attached to her accordion-playing foster-father and a wild but kind neighbor, Rudy, who refuses to join the Hitler Youth and convinces Liesel to steal for fun. The subject of their misdeeds is the wealthy mayor’s mysteriously reclusive and tragic wife (who has a whole library from which she “allows” Liesel to steal, and even selects specific titles to entice her). Over the ensuing years (throughout the war), Liesel learns to read, and she uses her skill (and stolen books) to calm her neighbors during bombing raids. She also uses them as a way to connect with the Jewish refugee, Max, who is kept hidden in their basement. When Max leaves to protect the Hubermanns, he is captured by the Nazi’s and is among the Jews marched through Molching on his way to Dachau. Liesel’s fury at seeing him captive is re-directed into writing her own story for Max. Later, when the town is unexpectedly demolished in a surprise bombing raid, Liesel’s book is lost in the rubble, but is recovered and kept by the weary Death. This uncommon perspective of the war from a German point of view, as the small village becomes increasingly impoverished and desperate, helps give this story a fresh perspective that students may not have considered, and raises issues beyond the Holocaust or more obvious horrors of war (though those are certainly present). Readers are left to focus more closely on the power of words, the capacity of healing, the comfort of small kindness, the nature of stereotypes and hope, and even existential questions about life and death. When Death finally returns to Liesel when she is an old woman living in Australia, and as he takes her, he returns her lost story to her. The ambiguous ending will leave students wondering whether Max and Liesel have made a life together, or gone their separate ways. Death’s musings about humans also provide food for thought.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems, Violence

Bringing the Shovel Down

Ross Gay (*Author*)

University of Pittsburgh Press: 2011

This book of poems by Black poet Ross Gay is promoted as a rather intimidating “re-imagining of the violent mythologies of state and power.” While some of the poems certainly can be read on that level, they are generally very accessible to teens and express themes they can readily relate to. Students of all races will recognize the emotions behind his poems about a broad range of topics, including exclusion and bullying (“For Some Slight I Can’t Quite Recall”), racial stereotyping (“Within Two Weeks the African-American Poet Ross Gay Is Mistaken for Both the African-American Poet Terrance Hayes and the African-American Poet Kyle Dargan, Not One of Whom Looks Anything Like the Others”, where he is asked to autograph a book that is not his), as well as others about violence, love, fear and loss. His poems communicate grief, indignation and rage, but also a strong sense of conscience, empathy, and a plea for understanding and change. One of the title pieces is an eerie and grim echo of the nursery rhyme/finger game “This Little Piggy.” Teachers will want to screen this text (and perhaps select specific poems), for language, content and reading level. The author also has a collection titled *Against-Which* (Cavankerry: 2006) that might be used together with (or instead of) this one. Selected poems by this author are also available online at literary websites for modern [poets](http://www.poets.org)^{xlii} and a magazine for [writers](http://www.pw.org)^{xliii}.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Justice/Injustice, Respecting Differences, Social Responsibility & Activism

Bronx Masquerade

Nikki Grimes (*Author*), Christopher Myers (*Illustrator*)

Dial: 2001/ Speak: 2003

The students in Mr. Ward's ethnically mixed inner-city high-school English class deal with problems such as dyslexia, low self-esteem, physical abuse, crime and gun violence, drug abuse, and teenage motherhood. Inspired by an assignment about the Harlem Renaissance, Wesley Boone (who hates school and sees no future for himself in a community dominated by guns and violence) finds passion for writing in the poems of Langston Hughes. That sets the ball rolling and now every Friday is “Open Mike” day where, one by one, the eighteen students begin to risk expressing what’s behind their “masquerade” to share their innermost thoughts, fears, and aspirations through poetry. In the process, they also reveal their talents as poets, painters, readers, and dreamers. Wesley and Tyrone Bittings offer angry rants that show their dislike of school and lack of hope for a future. Lupe Alvarin is desperate to have a baby so she will feel loved. Silent Raynard Patterson hides musical genius. “Bad girl” Porscha Johnson, needs an outlet for her anger after her mother’s overdose. There is the ultra-religious Sterling and Chankara, who just broke up with her abusive boyfriend. Raul Ramirez longs to paint—and to overcome the stereotype that all Latinos are low class, beer-swilling “banditos.” Sheila is getting teased because she wants to change her name. Both the overweight Janelle Battle and pretty-girl Tanisha Scott want people to see past their outer shells to get to know and appreciate them for who they really are. Diondra loves to draw, but everyone expects her to become a basketball player, because she is so tall. There is Judianne, a creative seamstress, and Devon “the smart kid” who longs to be a rapper. Almost any students will find a character they can relate to! The

xlii <http://www.poets.org>

xliii <http://www.pw.org>

students' poetry has another benefit as well: it changes their own preconceptions about each other and the climate of the classroom from one of bitterness, disconnection and unkindness, to empathy, understanding and genuine connection. Through the use of both poetry and first-person prose the author gives each student a distinct voice, presenting a range of ethnic and gender perspectives on teenage angst, alienation, unease, and need for both connection and individuation, and highlights problems such as family expectations, dating violence, addiction, gang violence, and racism. While some of the slang may become more "dated" as the years go by, the poems (from rap and free-verse to artistic and classic-style) become more sophisticated and intricate over the course of the book, and are likely to inspire readers to try a few of their own. Encourage students to role play the diverse characters and explore in more depth what makes each tick.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Team-Building, Violence

Call Me Ahab: A Short Story Collection

Anne Finger (*Author*)

Bison Books: 2009

This book of short stories is based on the premise that over the course of civilization, disabled figures (including those in mythology and the Bible) have had an impact on how civilization has viewed and defined itself by providing a counterpoint to normalcy, and often a metaphor for evil. The stories are funny, clever, and unsentimental, but they will likely challenge some readers, not because they are difficult to read, but because they require some background knowledge about mythology and the arts to appreciate the irony and metaphors. These rich tales reimagine lives of famous (and infamous) individuals beyond the margins of what we consider "normal." For example, imagine if Van Gogh was a brilliantly creative psychotic, living in a New York welfare hotel subsidized not by his wealthy brother, but subsisting on food stamps as he waits for his Social Security checks to kick in. Another imagines an elaborate inner life for the dwarf Mari Barbola in Velázquez's seventeenth century painting *Las meninas*; and another recreates the encounter between David and Goliath, from the point of view of the Philistine ridiculed for his gigantism. In another, the author imagines an empowering Hollywood debut (and affair) between two icons of disability: Helen Keller and Frida Kahlo. The title story is about Ahab's leg (the one lost to the famous white whale) which suggests a more complex relationship between the Captain and Ishmael. This book will certainly challenge the way readers view the disabled, from the gods of mount Olympus, to modern times. Select a specific story to share with students in regular English classes (along with appropriate supportive background materials) to launch discussions or their own writing projects, or use the collection as a whole with AP English classes.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Respecting Differences, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems, Violence

Caucasia

Danzy Senna (*Author*)

Riverhead: 1999

The Biracial daughters of a Black father and a White mother (intellectual activists in Boston's Civil Rights Movement in 1970s), Birdie and her older sister Cole are so close that they have their own private language (Elemeno). To the outside world, the sisters could not be more different: Birdie passes for White, while Cole's dark skin is like those of their Black classmates. Growing racial tensions and Birdie's mother's increasingly militancy contribute to the breakup of their parent's marriage. Both parents prefer Cole (whose racial identity is clear) and her father's new Black girlfriend openly rejects Birdie. Birdie's father secretly disappears with Cole—fleeing to Brazil, in hopes of finding real racial equality. The next day, the confused and bereft Birdie and her mother (who fears a raid by the FBI) “go underground,” leaving their friends, possessions, and identities behind. After drifting around the country, mother and daughter eventually settle in New Hampshire—passing as the daughter and wife of a deceased Jewish professor. Desperate to find Cole, yet afraid of betraying her mother, Birdie learns to “pass” as White but her never-ending quest to find her sister becomes a metaphor for finding her own identity. Years of financial shortages, lack of stability and connection, separation from her beloved sister, and a growing suspicion that her mother is psychotic make Birdie's adolescence lonely and difficult. She is sustained by her desire to reconnect with her father and sister, yet struggles with the realization that her sister's blackness would disrupt her mother's security, and that her own whiteness would be unwelcome to her father. In the end, Birdie's courage, optimism, and loyalty bring a satisfying reunion for the sisters. Told entirely from Birdie's perspective, this coming-of-age story examines race and identity in America, and draws closely from the author's own life (documented in her nonfiction memoir titled Where Did You Sleep Last Night?, which explores the issues of growing up in a Biracial dysfunctional family at a time when mixed race marriages had just becoming legal in many states). A teacher's guide (not reviewed) is available for this title. The underplayed issue of social class portrayed in this book provides a rich opportunity to mine the impact class and privilege have in our society. While interracial marriages are more commonly accepted today, and even our census forms now acknowledge Biracial identity, this book provides a basis for students to explore the different ways people perceive and construct a personal identity (based on race, ethnicity and gender). This book is likely to be most appropriate for advanced readers or AP English or Social Studies classes due to its reading level and complexity.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Social Systems

Children of A Lesser God

Mark Medoff (*Author*)

Dramatists Play service, Inc, 1998

Written in the late 1970s and debuting on Broadway in 1980, this short two-act play began as a challenge to the author by a deaf friend and actress to portray deaf and hearing-impaired people in a realistic manner. The play (and the Hollywood movie based on it, starring deaf actress Marlee Matlin) is loosely based on the life and tumultuous marriage of Phyllis Frelich, and significantly changed the way that society in general regarded people with hearing disabilities. The story centers on the relationship between James Leeds, an innovative hearing speech pathologist working with deaf high school student's school for the deaf, and a defiant young deaf woman, Sarah Norman. The opposing ideas about speech versus deafness create discord in their developing romantic relationship (James wants her to have more access to

“benefits” of the hearing world, Sarah resents his desire to “reform” her)). Sarah, who has cloistered herself at the school she grew up in, refuses to communicate except in sign language (though she has the ability to read lips and to speak). Initial hostility between the characters turns into an affair and ultimately results in marriage. The couple’s ongoing struggle between the deaf and hearing worlds grow as Sarah becomes determined not to let anyone speak for her but herself. This Tony-Award winning play is a difficult read (unlike some, it is more like blueprints for actors and the director than a piece of literature per se) but this powerful play is worth performing, particularly in a school that includes deaf or hard-of-hearing students. It also provides an interesting opportunity for students to consider ways we communicate, the tendency to treat people who are “differently-abled” as either “broken” or fragile and in need of coddling, and to understand the challenges faced by hearing impaired individuals. While many schools may not integrate deaf students, many students will have family members who experience hearing loss of some sort. Students may be interested in watching the film, rated “R” for sexually explicit scenes.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Social Systems

Color of Water, The: A Black Man’s Tribute to His White Mother

James McBride (*Author*)

Riverhead Trade: 2006

Part biography, part memoir, the author explores his upbringing as the son of a Black minister and a mother who was pointedly evasive about both her race and heritage. Information about his loving and fiercely protective mother is revealed through anecdotes that spotlight the challenges of raising twelve mixed-race children, in an often chaotic household, in the poverty of all-Black projects (mainly in Brooklyn, NY), where drugs and violence were ever-present. His mother demanded respect from her children, made sure they experienced the benefits of many free cultural events, and demanded good grades at the (primarily Jewish) schools the children were bused to. As a young man, the author found his mother to be a source of embarrassment and worry. The confusion fueled by her reluctance to answer the simplest questions about her own heritage (i.e., her race), left him uncertain about his own identity. His own need to clarify his racial identity at age thirty prompted him to uncover the truth about his mother’s life, which he accomplishes through informal interviews that allowed him to retrace her steps. In the process, he not only learns to understand and appreciate his mother, but learns more about himself. His recollections and his mother’s story appear in alternating chapters—providing an opportunity to compare their different perspectives. Ruth McBride Jordan was born in Poland in 1921 to a failed itinerant Orthodox rabbi, a cruel and sexually-abusive man. When her family fled pogroms and immigrated to the US, they settled in a small Virginia town that was both anti-Semitic and racist. In an act of self-preservation, Ruth ran away at age seventeen, but in the process, she both abandoned and denied her heritage. Settling in New York City, Ruth married a Black minister, converted to Christianity, and founded the all-Black New Brown Memorial Baptist Church in her Red Hook living room—she even attempts to “pass” as Black by evasively describing herself as “a light-skinned woman.” The book title comes from the maxim she taught her children: “God is the color of water,” illustrating her belief that religion and values should transcend race. Twice widowed, she and her children were continually confronted by racism, financial hardship, and the predictable challenges of raising twelve children in harsh conditions. The author credits his mother’s determination for ensuring that all twelve children completed college (in most cases, going on to obtain advanced degrees—all are quite successful in their chosen fields). Finally, at age 65, Ruth herself received a degree in social work from Temple University. This vivid account of growing in a racially ambiguous family in a racially-biased society, faced with the challenges of living in urban poverty (including drug-use and

violence), only opens the door to discuss themes such as bias, privilege, the effects of poverty, racial and cultural identity, or the impact of denying one's own heritage. It can be linked to curriculum content about civil rights, urban problems, and social and cultural systems, changes in social norms about mixed-race marriages and multicultural families. In addition, it provides an example of possibility for students growing up under similarly harsh conditions.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Human Rights, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Systems

Defending Jacob

William Landay (*Author*)

Delacorte Press: 2012

When a fourteen-year-old boy is found stabbed to death in the park near his middle school in an upper-class Boston suburb, veteran Assistant District Attorney Andy Barber takes the case, despite the fact that his son, Jacob, was a classmate of the victim. Andy, his wife, Laurie, and their teenage son, Jacob, have a loving family and idyllic life, and Andy is determined to find the killer and bring him (or her) to justice. He quickly becomes immersed in the case, fielding calls from angry parents demanding answers, working with police determined to make an arrest, and learning more about the complicated lives of teenagers, including his own, who each have their own secrets and reasons for keeping them. The entire community worries that a killer is on the loose and the Barbers worry that their son might be the next victim. The Barber's happy home life is unexpectedly shattered when their only child is charged with the grisly murder, after his bloody fingerprint is identified on the victim's clothes. Barber, now forced off the case and out of his office, devotes himself solely to defending his son. Jacob insists that he is innocent and his parents believe him. As the trial intensifies, damning facts and shocking revelations continue to surface. Laurie's mental health suffers from the strain as she alternately worries about her son and is consumed with guilt about whether she might have done something wrong as a parent; Jacob maintains his innocence and withdraws into sullen moody isolation; and the family's formerly robust community of friends withdraws and the family is shunned and harassed. Andy struggles as the drama in the courtroom threatens to crush his family and marriage. He realizes how little he knows about his son and struggles between loyalty and desire for justice. But there is more to this legal thriller: Andy's never-before-disclosed heritage as the son and grandson of violent men who killed becomes potential courtroom fodder, raising the question of a "murder gene." Within the structure of a grand jury hearing a year after the murder, tension builds as painful personal and ethical issues pertaining to a parent's responsibilities to a child, to a family, and to society at large are raised. Is Jacob a sociopathic killer, or just another misunderstood (and innocent) teen? How far can and will his parents go to protect their beloved only child? Do any of us really know what we each are capable of, when push comes to shove? The author skillfully keeps the reader guessing about Jacob's culpability and true nature up to the final chapters. Like other legal thrillers used with this age group (including To Kill A Mockingbird or Snow Falling on Cedars) there are many points for discussion, self-reflection, debate and potential writing assignments. In addition to the questions posed above, students can consider topics such as fairness, how well we really know those closest to us, differences in ways the legal, justice and penal systems treat individuals of color compared to those who are White (including gender differences), the roles and responsibilities that the school and teens at the school played in the novel, the roles that White privilege and social class played in the novel, where parental responsibility ends and personal responsibility begins, the role of nature versus nurture regarding violent behavior, whether one can predict who will or won't act on violent or

destructive impulses, whether “citizen crime-watch” groups violate the rights of accused or protect the community as a whole, and how forgiveness and community connections may prevent violence or offer healing from its effects.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Social Responsibility, Social Systems, Violence

Domestic Work: Poems

Natasha Trethewey (*Author*)

Graywolf Press: 2000

This debut collection of poems by the 19th US Poet Laureate blends free verse and traditional poetry forms, including ballads, sonnets and triplets to create vivid portraits of hard-working Black-American families, past and present, as they earn a living, manage their own households and those of others. Many poems provide a strong social commentary on the lives and the conditions of the author’s subjects, particularly those she based on photographs of Black working-class Americans (mostly from the South) in the pre-Civil Rights 20th-century US. Based in part on her grandmother’s life, characters include nameless factory and dock workers, domestics, and homemakers, as well as personal subjects (e.g. remembrances of her own Biracial family and upbringing). Students of all ethnicities will be drawn into the simple accessible language of these poems—which can be appreciated on various levels, depending on students' interests and abilities. Be sure to help students make connections between the poems and the history and experience of Black Americans; ask them for their insights about the messages provided. The author is a member the Dark Room Collective (a group of young Black American writers and poets) featured in the [New York Times](#)^{xliv}.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Human Rights, Relationships, Social Systems

Drowning Anna

Sue Mayfield (*Author*)

Disney-Hyperion: 2004

The novel opens with the attempted suicide of fifteen-year-old Anna Goldsmith. From there, chapters alternate between the first-person narrative of Anna's one remaining friend, Melanie, entries from Anna's diary (which Anna is clutching when her mother discovers her unconscious), and third-person viewpoints of Anna's mother and father at the hospital, as they anxiously wait for her to come out of her coma. Diary entries provide the reader with background information and history: beginning with the smart, pretty and talented thirteen-year-old Anna’s first days in her new small-town school, characterized by intense gossip (about her foreign accent and near-perfect grades). Things seem to improve when she is befriended by witty and charismatic Hayley Parkin (the most popular girl in school). Before long, Hayley begins subtly teasing Anna, and over time escalates to cruel remarks and physical violence that frighten Anna. The author leaves the cause of the rift between the girls a mystery, but examines how Haley (always out of sight of teachers and other adults) uses subtle manipulation and skillful power plays to undermine Anna’s relationships, reputation, and confidence. Haley even tries to befriend Melanie as an insidious way to chip

xliv http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/27/arts/the-dark-room-collective-where-black-poetry-took-wing.html?_r=0

away at her loyalty to Anna. As Anna's self-esteem plummets, she becomes increasingly depressed, and resorts to cutting herself, hoping for some relief from the emotional pain she is suffering. When her busy but well-intentioned parents discover what she is doing, they go to the school for help. A few superficial changes take place, and the adults work to address what they misinterpret as a simple "personality clash" rather addressing the broader issue of bullying and aggression. This book can be used to talk about different types of bullying (preferably as part of a broader school-wide bullying prevention initiative) and the difference between conflict and bullying (a form of aggression). Teachers and school counselors will want to screen this book together and be prepared to have guided discussions about depression, suicide and its warning signs, the practice of "cutting" (which, like eating disorders is most common among teen girls), and to provide personalized emotional support for students who need it. There are many opportunities to role play scenes as a way of identifying character's motivations, to problem-solve strategies, and to examine the various roles that bystanders played throughout the novel. Peer pressure, communication, social class and gender play a role in the novel. This book ends without closure—so students should be given time to problem-solve with adults the types of things that would need to happen for each character to find closure; the topics might include: the role that adults at home and school had in perpetuating the problem, questions about the type of discipline that Haley should receive and what form of reparation/restitution should be required of her, what supports Anna would need as she transitioned back into school (what issues would she face?), what types of ongoing support would she need to move forward, and what overall climate changes need to happen to prevent this type of behavior from recurring.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Peer Relationships, Social Systems, Team-Building, Violence

Frankenstein

Mary Wollstencraft Shelley (*Author*)

Penguin Classics: 2003

This classic novel, originally published in 1818, was later revised by the author and republished in 1831 with the intention of making it more appealing to a broader audience. The language used may be challenging for some readers, and students will have to suspend any ideas they have about this story based on movies they may have seen, as the written text is quite different (though that provides an opportunity to do some comparisons between the different formats, as per Common Core State Standards). This science fiction novel tells the story of Victor Frankenstein, a gifted young student and budding scientist who is obsessed with the secret of re-animating dead flesh. Frankenstein's "monster" is a deformed creature abandoned by his creator at the very moment of his 'birth'—in fact, Frankenstein seems to forget that it even exists. At first animal-like, the creature gradually develops human sensibilities, and (in Shelley's version) is able to speak (often in long soliloquies) and to express his feelings. While the creature has sincere instincts to do good, his efforts to become a part of the community are cruelly rebuffed (primarily because of his appearance), and his hurt feelings and isolation lead to episodes of furious revenge. When the wretched creature stumbles back into Frankenstein's life, he expresses his contempt for his creator for making him ugly and less than human; he rightfully hates Frankenstein for both abandoning him and depriving him of love (of a father towards his son). While the monster battles desperately for companionship, love, knowledge, and justice, the young doctor wallows in guilt and depression, unable to see either the capacity for virtue in his creation, or provide it with the tools it needs to find a peaceful existence. The primary narrative is bookended by the letters of Robert Walton, an Englishman who is leading an expedition to the North Pole and stumbles into the final chapters of Frankenstein's story. While his ship is trapped amid ice floes, Walton is unexpectedly visited by the young

doctor, who is trekking across the frozen Arctic Ocean in pursuit of his wandering and despondent creation. Frankenstein comes aboard and tells his fantastic tale to Walton, who in turn writes it down in lengthy letters to his sister. The story is revealed through the captain's letters. This moral tale leaves the reader to judge who, in the end, is the true monster and calls into question what it means to be human, and in what ways the creature's monstrous appearance is a metaphor for Frankenstein's inner self (is the creature a "twisted mirror" of its creator?). The novel raises moral and ethical questions relevant to current issues (e.g. cloning, artificial intelligence, genetic engineering and modification, animal testing, the line between genius and insanity, whether violence is ever justified, etc.) and provides the obvious questions about the importance placed on physical appearances, and how we often judge people on superficial qualities, especially based on lack of information (or misinformation). Be sure to ask students to consider whether Frankenstein's efforts would have been viewed differently if his creation had been made appealing or beautiful. This book is also one that is often identified as an example of the ways that disabled individuals are historically portrayed as either evil or frightening, or pitiable; this is another direction student discussion could be guided.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes , Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Global Citizenship, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Serving the Community, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems, Team-Building , Violence

Girl in Reverse

Barbara Stuber (*Author*)

Margaret K. McElderry Books: 2014

Being adopted isn't easy—especially when you're seen as a national enemy. When Lily was three, her Chinese birth-mother put her up for adoption, and then disappeared without a trace--or so Lily was told. Adopted by a White American couple, Lily grew up in the US and tried to forget her past, and her vague memories of her mother. Now, in 1951, she is seventeen and the only Chinese person in her Kansas City high school. She longs to know more about her heritage. As the Korean War rages, media-fueled hatred for Communist Chinese, combined with Lily's Asian heritage, make her a target in her high school and community. She is sick of the racism she faces, a fact her adoptive parents won't take seriously. For Lily, the war is everywhere—at the dinner table, in the halls at school, and especially within her own skin. When her brainy little brother, Ralph, finds a box containing a baffling jumble of broken antiques with her name on it (clues to her past left by her "Gone Mom"), Lily becomes obsessed with learning about why she was abandoned. As was common at the time (when birth parents' identities were kept secret), her adoptive parents dismiss her concerns, and insist that as a member of their family, she not live her life "in reverse." When she seeks help of a nun at the orphanage who helped with her adoption, she is faced with more questions when she is given yet another box of Chinese artifacts, left for her by her birth mother. The opening of a new exhibit of Chinese art and antiquities at the local museum finally provides her with some surprising revelations about her past as she and Ralph attempt to match the fragments with rare Chinese artifacts on display. There, she also meets the artistic but infuriating Elliot James who helps her piece together her own history and find her cultural identity. Themes of identity, the meaning of family and "home" are interspersed with those of racial stereotypes, racism, and the war. This book's flaws lie in its incomplete development of Lily's adoptive parents' characters and the perspectives about adoption (particularly interracial adoption) of the time; these "flaws" are worthwhile points to address with students.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Global Citizenship, Human Rights, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Systems, Violence

Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide

Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn (*Authors*)

Vintage: 2010

Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has referred to the oppression and violence against girls and women as the central moral issue of our time. This husband and wife team of Pulitzer Prize-winning journalists for the New York Times have traveled extensively to cover stories about human rights issues, and to highlight the impact women's rights has on our global economy. This nonfiction book features the compelling stories of several heroic women they have met throughout Asia and Africa—women who face tremendous odds and personal danger with a sense of commitment and dedication to changing the status quo. The authors use these stories to illustrate the ways that culture and customs historically suppress girls and women, to call attention to particular issues that dramatically affect women's rights, health, education and safety, and to provide a context for understanding why some aid programs work and other (even well-intentioned ones) fail. They state that more girls have been killed in the last fifty years, precisely because they are female, than men were killed in all the wars of the twentieth century. The key message is that a little assistance can be transformative and that we can each help. Some students may be overwhelmed by the facts; others, by the challenging text. Consider presenting it in small chunks for study, or use the PBS Special film by the same name available as DVD or on You Tube. Screen both film and book carefully for content about honor killings, childbirth injuries, sex trafficking, and rape; be prepared to talk about these issues and allow enough time for students to process the information. Be ready to respond to teens' sense of altruism and offer ways they can get involved in some initiatives themselves; there are a variety of aid organizations listed below in *Websites* that have activities that will appeal to teens.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Global Citizenship, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Serving the Community, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems, Team-Building, Violence

Hazelwood High Trilogy: Tears of a Tiger (1994; reprinted 2013) Forged By Fire (1997) Darkness Before Dawn (2001)

Sharon Draper (*Author*)

Atheneum Books for Young Readers: 1994-2001

This author, a former English teacher, is a prodigious writer whose specialty is writing character-driven books for teens about the problems they face (often because they feel invincible, and poor or impulsive choices inadvertently lead them into unintended dilemmas). This particular trilogy deals with the consequences of driving drunk and suicidal ideation brought on by guilt (*Tears of a Tiger*); substance abuse, child abuse, risk-taking behavior (pyromania) (*Forged by Fire*); and inappropriate sexual advances by an adult and date rape (*Darkness Before Dawn*). Students will find these books relevant and relatable. Several author interviews address the authors' process and inspiration for writing.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Responsibility & Activism, Violence

xliv <http://www.halftheskymovement.org/pages/film>

xlvi https://www.bookbrowse.com/author_interviews/full/index.cfm/author_number/1854/sharon-m-draper

xlvii http://www.teachingbooks.net/author_collection.cgi?id=52&a=1

Help, The

Kathryn Stockett (*Author*)

Berkley Trade: 2011

This novel follows three central characters (Skeeter, Aibileen and Minny) in suburban Jackson, Mississippi in 1962, at the intersection of the Civil Rights Movement and the Jim Crow era. The intertwined histories and stratified lives of a group of privileged (and mostly bigoted) White women and the Black women they employ as domestic help are examined. Both groups of women are suffocated by the social protocol of class, race, and gender expectations that bind their lives and era. The story begins as twenty-two-year-old Skeeter returns home after graduating from college. While her mother will not be satisfied until her bright opinionated daughter has landed a proper man, Skeeter longs for a different kind of life with more purpose. Normally, she would find solace with the beloved maid who raised her, but Constantine has mysteriously disappeared and no one will tell Skeeter why or where she has gone. Kind, wise, and dignified Aibileen, a Black maid employed by one of Skeeter's friends, is raising the woman's daughter—her seventeenth White child. The loss of Aibileen's own son (whose tragic death in a work accident resulted from his White bosses' inaction) has caused an attitude shift that affects her outlook on her own life, and that of her White employer. Minny, Aibileen's rotund best friend, may be the best cook in the county, but her sharp tongue and impulsive outbursts have cost her another job. Minny finally finds a position working for a newcomer who doesn't know Minny's reputation: a naïve and flamboyant newlywed who is ostracized as "White trash." Skeeter persuades Minny and Aibileen to join forces with her to tell their stories—a clandestine and risky project that snowballs and forever changes the way women on both sides of the racial divide view one another. It also provides Skeeter with painful but much needed closure about Constantine's disappearance. The novel deftly spotlights the "mean girl" petty jealousies, class-consciousness, manipulation and peer pressure that characterize the relationships between the White women. Consider asking students about how they define the rules and limits they live by, those they can't tolerate, and when they need to cross the line between what's comfortable and what's necessary for personal growth, and to reflect on the source of interdependence between the women and the way power differences affect them. Multiple formats are available.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems

Home

Toni Morrison (*Author*)

Vintage: 2013

Frank Money joined the army to escape his small-town life and limited options, but left behind his cherished and fragile little sister, Cee. His return from the Korean War is fraught with problems related to the segregation and racism of the 1950s, which include the refusal of White Americans to value or acknowledge his service to his country. Having suffered the loss of his two closest friends (the true nature of which revealed as the book progresses), Frank suffers from post traumatic stress, drifting purposelessly through a haze of alcohol, grief, shame, and violent flashbacks. When a mysterious message alerts him that Cee is in grave danger, he finds direction as he travels to his native Georgia to search for her. Together, they return to their rural hometown of Lotus where Cee is nursed back to health by the local women who watched her grow up. As Cee heals both physically and spiritually, Frank comes to terms with his own demons and the siblings' mutual healing teaches them the value of "home." This short novel is

filled with meaning and the reading guide at the end poses many questions that can be used with students. The book also raises ethical questions about Dr. Scott's medical experimentation (eugenics) and the treatment of war veterans (particularly those of color).

Themes: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Relationships, Social Systems, Violence

Homeboyz

Alan Lawrence Sitomer (*Author*)

Jump At the Sun: 2008

In this final book of the trilogy that includes The Hoopster and Hip Hop High School, Teddy Anderson's ten-year-old little sister Tina is murdered in a random drive-by shooting. His family is devastated; his mother sinks into deep depression while his father struggles to run both the household and his declining laundry business. The situation is made worse by the fact that Tina's death is trivialized by the local gang that rules the family's deteriorating neighborhood, dismissing the incident as just another case of "RP, RT" (wrong place, wrong time). When Teddy's elaborate plans for revenge against his sister's killer are foiled by the police and he is arrested for attempted homicide, his family is shocked. Teddy is fortunately released from prison, placed on house arrest and sentenced to hours of community service. Under the supervision of a tough but capable probation officer, Mariana Diaz, who oversees an innovative rehabilitation program for at-risk youth, Teddy is also assigned to tutor a wild and foul-mouthed twelve-year-old orphan (and would-be "gansta") named Micah. Unfortunately, instead of taking the program seriously, Teddy (a smart but unlikeable computer whiz with a serious attitude problem) decides to take his revenge by defrauding the state education system of hundreds of thousands of dollars. In the process, he initially fails to see Micah's desperate need for love and trust. The novel contains many examples of drug use ("weed" and "white powder"), graphic violence (shootings and gang rapes) and street-inflected foul language (including gender-based verbal abuse of girls), balanced by a fairly heavy but positive moral agenda. In the end, Teddy is somewhat more socialized, though no more likeable; Micah's rapid reform is less realistic, but does show readers the option of taking "another path." The author is an inner-city high school English teacher in Los Angeles who specializes in engaging reluctant readers—and this novel will definitely appeal. In addition to gang violence, the perils of growing up as a boy or girl of color in an inner-city neighborhood, and moral themes highlighted in the text itself, be sure to discuss ways that Teddy and Micah did (or didn't) change—and encourage students to extrapolate on each boy's future, and what advice they might give them to use their talents in a positive way.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Serving the Community, Social Systems, Violence

Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet

Jamie Ford (*Author*)

Ballantine Books: 2009

This debut historical novel captures the long-standing cultural, ethnic, and political prejudices between Old World Japanese and Chinese peoples. Set in World War II Seattle, twelve-year-old Henry Lee (who is Chinese) falls in love with his Japanese classmate Keiko Okabe; both are scholarship students at a prestigious elementary school, where the White students shun them. Henry's parents would disown him if

they learned of his relationship and take blatant measures to distinguish themselves from the Japanese residents around them—insisting that their son wear a button claiming “I am Chinese” to protect him from being accidentally rounded up Seattle’s Japanese residents who are being relocated to internment camps. When Keiko and her family are evacuated, she and Henry make a promise to reunite once the war ends. The plot alternates between Henry’s recollections of his life in the early 1940s with his present in 1984, after his wife Ethel has died of cancer. The grown Henry happens upon the discovery of a long-forgotten storeroom of the abandoned belongings of interred Japanese families at a deserted hotel, which stands at the gateway to Seattle’s former Japantown. Henry becomes obsessed with sifting through the contents of the hotel’s dark dusty basement, searching for signs of the Okabe family’s belongings. He finally finds the clue he has been searching for and in the process uncovers a shocking revelation about how fate (and his departed wife) intervened to keep him from reuniting with Kieko. The story is filled with ethnic tensions, racial stereotyping, nationalism, bullies, and intergenerational conflicts (particularly between fathers and sons), friendships, FBI raids, and intrigue. Henry’s childhood friendship with Sheldon, an older Black jazz saxophonist provides a musical connection and teens will relate to first (and lost) love and enduring hope. Many aspects of the plot connect with history curricula about anti-Japanese sentiments at the end of World War II and Japanese interment. The role of forgiveness and the ability to accept circumstances we can’t control are also meaningful discussion topics. Students may also be interested in Gail Tsukiyama’s *The Samurai’s Garden* (St. Martin’s Griffin: 2008), which also highlights ethnic tensions between the Japanese and Chinese, but from quite a different perspective. Available in electronic and audio formats.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Systems

I Am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban

Malala Yousafzai and Christina Lamb (*Authors*)

Little, Brown and Company: 2013

This first-person nonfiction account follows the courageous journey of fifteen-year-old Pakistani schoolgirl Malala Yousafzai, who was shot in the head at a point-blank range in 2012 by the Taliban, because (beginning at age 11) she had been outspoken about girls’ rights to receive an education. Malala survived the assassination attempt, and has become an advocate for education and the need to resist oppression of women and girls globally. From her remote Swat valley in northern Pakistan, she has become a global symbol of peaceful protest and (at the age of sixteen) the youngest nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize. Malala’s family is unique by her country’s standards: while her mother is illiterate, her father is a teacher who attempted start a school under the critical eye of the Taliban and instilled in his daughter a thirst for learning. Uprooted by terrorism, Malala’s father continues to champion his daughter’s rights in a culture that devalues daughters over sons. This inspirational story demonstrates the power of one person’s voice to inspire change. Some of the writing in this original version is choppy and may be challenging for reluctant readers, but selected portions can be read aloud, and (as this bibliography goes to press), an adapted version for Grade 5-11 students (*Little, Brown Books for Young Readers*) is now available (though it was not possible to review it, an annotation for it appears in the Grade 6-8 *Student Literature* section above. There are also many free support materials available to expand discussions. Learning, and engagement with students: from an official [music video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iAi2pY7b0MQ)^{xlviii}; to her moving 2013 [speech](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5SClml43dTo&feature=kp)^{xlix} to the UN; the global [foundation](http://malalafund.org)^l established in her name that does global work; and various [news](http://abcnews.go.com/WNT/video/diane-sawyer-sits-inspirational-malala-yousafzai-20499735)^{li} and media interviews.

xlviii [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iAi2pY7b0MQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iAi2pY7b0MQ)

xlix [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5SClml43dTo&feature=kp](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5SClml43dTo&feature=kp)

l <http://malalafund.org>

li <http://abcnews.go.com/WNT/video/diane-sawyer-sits-inspirational-malala-yousafzai-20499735>

Malala's courage, her ability to connect with aspects of American pop-culture to bring people together around a global cause (while maintaining her Muslim faith, customs, and patriotism to her home country) are fascinating points for students to discuss, debate, or write about.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Global Citizenship, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Serving the Community, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems, Team-Building, Violence

I Have Three Things to Tell You My Friend

R.M. D'Amato (*Author*)

Wise Media Group: 2014

This 2014 National Indie Excellence Award Finalist is set in 2033 where becoming a senior citizen is fraught with tough choices. The book follows three main characters—two approaching retirement, and one trying to cope with the changes and uncertainty of his youthful future. A year away from forced retirement at age sixty five, veteran teacher John Sinclair faces two choices: a state-funded second career (with genetically-enhanced health and extended lifespan), or permanent retirement and an uncertain life that will be terminated by age eighty. The state will pay for his 'rehabilitation', a university education to prepare for a new career, and a guaranteed 160-year lifespan, if he chooses the former. While every retiree faces the same choice of starting anew, this dedicated high-school teacher wonders whether he has the energy or desire to commit to a new career (he has become disillusioned and drained by budget cuts, bureaucrats, and impersonal technology that proscribes students' learning experiences). Personally, Sinclair's marriage has begun to wither, and his wife's departure for Japan to start her new career has left him to make his decision in relative isolation. While preliminary medical treatments have made him feel more invigorated, the indecisive Sinclair spends his spare time repairing an old motorcycle, and reminiscing about a lost love and choices not made. The second character, Sanchez, is Sinclair's student teacher. A young man faced with his own difficult choices, Sanchez has begun teaching as a fall-back career in case he doesn't get into law school, but he is torn between wanting to teach (and engaging students in meaningful ways) and joining his husband in a shared law career. The third character is Smith, an angry mysterious school janitor, also in his last year before retirement, who must cope with an abusive boss. Smith loves opera, brews his own tea in an antique samovar, and broods about his unrequited love for fellow janitor Helen. The central theme is re-invention and second chances. Teens are likely to relate to the characters' indecision and uncertainty about their futures, as well as their angst and frustration. What would you be willing to trade for a longer life or the possibility of reinventing yourself and starting over with a lifetime of knowledge and experience? Would you make different choices if you had the option to "start over" late in life? Would you choose your "path not taken?" What defines our lives, and in what ways might an extended lifespan change the roles work and relationships play? The novel includes various modern-day themes and ethical dilemmas, including gun control (guns are outlawed), mandated health care, genetic engineering, medical ethics (of the "if you can, does it mean you should" variety), the loss of constitutional and civil rights, and euthanasia. It is also a compelling thriller filled with both vulnerable and disturbed characters and a nail-biting ending. This book will be a fast read for most students and presents dilemmas similar to those posed in Huxley's Brave New World or Lois Lowry's The Giver, from a different perspective, and is a contrast to The Hunger Games or Vonnegut's short story Harrison Bergeron. This title is also available in electronic format though beware not to get the unedited beta format (which is filled with grammatical errors); this book contains profanity and sexual references.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Serving the Community

Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks, The

Rebecca Skloot (*Author*)

Broadway Books: 2011

Henrietta Lacks was a thirty-one-year-old Black mother of five in Baltimore when she died in 1951 of a particularly invasive form of cervical cancer. A poor migrant from the tobacco farms of Virginia, she was given painful experimental radiation treatments at John's Hopkins University Hospital—the closest hospital that would treat Black patients. During her treatment, doctors took tissue samples from her cervix for research, without her knowledge or consent. The research produced an “immortal” line of cells (known as HeLa) that have been instrumental in medical discoveries from the polio vaccine to AIDS treatments, cloning and gene mapping, and fertility treatments; they even traveled on a rocket sent into space. Henrietta's cells have become the basis of a multi-billion dollar industry, yet she remained virtually anonymous and her family has never received any compensation—ironically suffering decades of health problems because they were too poor to afford medical insurance. This nonfiction book poignantly portrays the devastating impact Mrs. Lacks' death had on her husband and children. It also shows their mixture of anger, pride, disbelief, questions and distrust when, decades later, they gradually came to understand the true value of Henrietta's unknowing contribution to medical science. The author, a science journalist, spent a decade slowly gaining the trust of the family, piecing together the scientific and personal aspects of Mrs. Lacks' life and helping the family (particularly her angry youngest daughter Deborah) learn the truth about the woman they lost. Use this to spark discussion or projects about medical ethics, poverty and race, the arrogance and politics of medicine, and the sacrifices of real people who contribute to the development of life-saving scientific discoveries. It also raises important questions about who owns our bodies, what science owes subjects of its research, and how are we remembered. This book is also available in electronic and audio formats.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Relationships, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems

Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl

Harriet Jacobs (*Author*), under the pseudonym Linda Brent

Signet Classics: 2010

Harriet Jacobs' (1813-1897) memoir is unique in that it is one of the few and first counts of Southern slavery written by a woman—other accounts, such as those of Frederick Douglass, were written by men. First published in 1861 (assisted by abolitionist Maria Child, who edited and wrote an introduction to it), the book is largely drawn from a series of letters Jacobs wrote between 1853 and 1861 to her friends in the abolitionist movement. The book's authorship and authenticity were initially questioned because it was so unique, and complicated by Jacobs' use of pseudonyms for herself and others (which she claimed was intended to protect their identities, but no doubt ensured the her own safety and that of her family); it has since been authenticated through her letters. Born a slave in rural North Carolina, the young Harriet learned to read and write, a rarity among slaves. At age of 11 she was sent to a neighboring farm and a new master, referred to as "Dr. Flint" in the book. She describes the many atrocities of slavery—including beatings, floggings, burnings, overwork, starvation, and dehumanization, splitting families and selling individuals as commodities viewed as less than human. She also describes first-hand the sexual indignities to which women were subjected in slavery, and describes the calculated strategies she used to avoid and deflect Flint's repeated sexual advances which began in her teen years (she even began an affair with a White, single attorney, with whom she had two children). When Flint still refused to leave her alone, she

became more determined to secure her freedom. The bulk of the book describes how Jacobs hid precariously in a tiny attic in the home of her grandmother (a free Black woman who inspired her), for an astonishing seven years. There are also accounts of her prior attempts to flee, including a harrowing several days hiding in a snake-filled swamp. Her love and concern for her two children is evident, and she is later successfully reunited with them. At her death, Jacobs was buried in the prestigious Mt. Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, MA. This book may be a bit challenging for low-level readers due to the stilted language, but they may respond to her inspiring story if it is read aloud. Refer to this book to discuss the impact of slavery on women, how Jacob's perspective as a woman differs from that of men who told their stories, or to discuss the effect education (in particular, literacy) made on Jacobs life and helped her achieve her goal of freedom.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Relationships, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems, Violence

Juno (The Shooting Script)

Diablo Cody and Ivan Reitman (*Authors*)
Newmarket Press: 2008

Using the shooting script of a movie provides an interesting way for students to approach a story in an alternate way. This one, about teen pregnancy and resilience, follows smart and quirky Juno MacGuff, a take-charge teenager who attends Dancing Elk High School in rural Minnesota. Juno marches to the beat of her own drummer, but underneath her tough, no-nonsense exterior, she's just another vulnerable teen searching for answers. While most girls Juno knows spend their time shopping or updating their social media profiles, Juno finds herself dealing with an unexpected pregnancy (the result of a bored afternoon tryst). With the help of her best friend Leah, she plans to find her unborn baby the perfect parents by placing a free ad in a local community paper. They find the Loring, an affluent suburban couple longing to adopt their first child, but time and further scrutiny reveal that their marriage is not so idyllic, and their motives are not as they first appeared to be. With the liberal support of her father and stepmother, Juno moves through the nine months of her pregnancy as an adventure on the road to self-discovery and adulthood. This script and the film can be used as an impetus to talk about teen sexuality, the complex realities of teen pregnancy, and the long-term impact it has on young lives of the teens and their children—and teens should certainly be encouraged to evaluate the depiction of Juno as wise-beyond-her-years in light of her rather questionable decisions, “reality check” the apparent effortless with which she approaches her dilemma and the pregnancy itself, the response of her family, the responsibility of keeping a child versus putting a baby up for adoption, what makes a good parent, etc. As an interesting side note, students may be interested in the fact that Ellen Page (who plays Juno in the film) publically “came out” in early 2014 and talked about her struggles as a young lesbian. This script includes an introduction by the author. If students enjoy using this format, they may be interested in using shooting scripts for other films such as Good Will Hunting, which explores issues such as social class, privilege, and friendship or Erin Brockavitch about a working-class divorced single mother turned law clerk, who advocates for poor families involved in a class action law suit against PG&E for environmental pollution, and others.

THEMES: Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Peer Relationships, Social Responsibility, Social Systems

King's Speech, The: How One Man Saved the British Monarchy

Mark Logue and Peter Conradi (*Authors*)

Sterling: 2010

Author Logue, the grandson of Lionel Logue (aka, “the ‘charlatan’ who saved a king”) based this biography partially on his grandfather’s diaries and on new material about the speech impediments and therapies that helped Britain’s King George VI (the current Queen of England’s father). Prince Albert (known to his family as “Bertie”) was plagued his whole life by severe stuttering which only became worse as he grew older, and was particularly embarrassing when he was required to speak in public as part of his princely duties. To his mortification, these occasions left him literally speechless and made him the topic of cruel jokes. Though the prince was a kind and thoughtful man whose many good qualities were obscured by his painful shyness and debilitating speech impairment, many around him viewed him as not only a liability to the monarchy, but a bit of a dunce, compared to his older brother, the recently crowned King Edward VIII. Due in part to the efforts of the his loving wife (then Duchess of York), help arrived in the form of an Australian commoner (Lionel Logue) whose unorthodox but successful methods teaching elocution (pioneering today’s field of speech therapy) brought him to the attention of the Royal Household. Logue soon took on his new client in secret, and over the ensuing years gave the determined Prince/King his voice. In 1936, on the brink of World War II, Edward VIII suddenly abdicated the throne in scandal to marry Wallis Simpson, the controversial woman he loved. Once Albert became King, he was forced to step even more into the limelight to take the place of his glamorous, social, romanticized (though apparently irresponsible) older brother. With his country in a crisis and desperate for leadership, the shy new monarch agonized about how he would possibly lead and inspire his empire while unable to clearly verbally communicate his most basic thoughts to his countrymen. At a time when radio broadcasts were critical to reaching his constituents, the therapy succeeded in helping the King gain more self-confidence and to speak more clearly. While he never completely overcame his stutter, he was able to speak fluently enough to satisfy all but his most severe critics, and to lead his Empire through a devastating war and harsh economic times. The story of the two men is both an inspiring tale of triumph over adversity and the story of an unlikely friendship between a reluctant king and his charismatic subject (often hilariously complicated by rules about royal etiquette). The book was published just before the opening of the movie of the same name—and using them in tandem with students can provide both the back-story and interesting glimpses into the private lives of the British Monarchy (including vignettes of the current queen and her sister as young girls who doted on their loving and witty father). Also available in audio format. The film contains profanity but is not used gratuitously.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Respecting Differences, Social Responsibility

Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse, The: A Novel

Louise Erdich (*Author*)

Harper Perennial: 2009

Set on a fictional Turtle-Mountain Objibwe Indian reservation in North Dakota called Little No Horse, and told in third person narrative, this novel spans most of the twentieth century. It opens with the revelation that Father Damien Modeste is not what he appears. In fact, he is a woman—the former Agnes DeWitt, who, while was escaping a troubled life as a former nun and farm woman, decided to assume the real Father Modeste’s identity after he was killed in a flood on his way to minister to the reservation. Hiding her true identity, Agnes spends the next eighty years as the Ojibwe tribe’s beloved priest. Only one person knows her secret: the now-deceased Sister Leopolda (who appears in earlier novels by the author), a

disturbed, sadistic, and murderous nun, who revealed her many sins to Father Modeste in the confessional—so he is bound by vows of secrecy to keep her confidences. Leopolda has somehow been nominated for sainthood—the result of some miracles associated with her—which prompts an investigation by an emissary from the Vatican. The aged Father Modeste realizes his own secrets will be shockingly revealed upon his imminent death, and he must decide whether to reveal Leopolda’s secrets, which are intertwined with his own. His decision to write to the Pontiff to reveal the truth about Sister Leopolda causes him to reflect back on his unusual life and its stark contrasts (this interdependence of opposites on each other is symbolic of an ancient Ojibwe spiritual belief). Screen this novel for adult themes, which include eroticism and ribald humor that might not be deemed appropriate for your students. There are many interesting themes: including gender role stereotypes, confusing material wealth and power with happiness, keeping secrets about morality, the role of women in religion, the practice of forcing conversion and Christianity on Native American tribes, and the nature of the treatment of native Americans by the government and society, etc. Wonderful tales within the larger story each provide their own moral lessons. For example, Father Damien becomes afraid when a parishioner hints that he knows the secret of the priest’s identity—but it is just a ploy to distract the priest from his chess game (cautioning us to wait before acting on our emotions). For other works by indigenous authors, consider Sherman Alexie and Leslie Marmon Silko ([Ceremony](#)). Electronic and audio formats are available.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Serving the Community, Social Responsibility, Social Systems, Violence

Les Misérables

Victor Hugo (*Author*)

Simon & Brown: 2012

Though the sheer length of this book may make this classic historical novel daunting or even inaccessible for some students, this masterpiece about one man’s struggles, resistance, persistence, and hope to overcome overwhelming obstacles is, more than 150 years after it was first published in 1862, still brimming with meaning and relevance for today’s learners. The saga of Jean Valjean is one of poverty, injustice and the human condition, set against the backdrop of decades of post-Napoleonic French society. But it is so much more, and there are many levels at which to approach this book: as an historical look at French politics and history while the nation teeters on the brink of revolution; as a detective story in which the relentless Inspector Javert obsessively pursues the escaped convict Jean Valjean; as a drama about crime and punishment, restitution and redemption; as a romance across class divides and stereotypes; and as a metaphysical and spiritual struggle between the good and evil that coexist in each of us. It is a powerful plea for social justice, political enlightenment and personal charity. But the message about the hope that we can do good and be better people, in spite of life’s obstacles, bolstered by forgiveness and love is what stands out most. Compare this with Rohinton Mistry’s [A Fine Balance](#) (reviewed in the 2009 [Companion Bibliography](#)). Be sure to use a good translation and an unabridged version to retain the character and intensity of the author’s original. This title has been translated into many languages and is available in many formats—including numerous film and musical versions. Some versions of the play or musical have been adapted for high school students and can be used (rather than an abridged version of the book) if you feel that would provide a more accessible venue for your students.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Serving the Community, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems, Team-Building, Violence

Little Prince, The

Antoine de Sainte-Exupéry (*Author*), Katherine Woods (*Translator*)
Harcourt Brace & Company: 1943/1971

The full annotation for this book appears in Grades 6-8 section. While simple enough for reluctant readers in Grades 6-12, it is also appropriate for students in Grade 9-12 AP classes and the personal insights and meanings will change over time.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Global Citizenship, Human Rights, Respecting Differences, Serving the Community, Social Responsibility, Social Systems

Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven, The

Sherman Alexie (*Author*)
Grove Press: (20th Anniversary Edition) 2013

This edition of the author's first collection of short stories is comprised of twenty-four interconnected stories (each tied to the next by common characters or place). Told in nontraditional narrative that combine surreal imagery, flashbacks, dream sequences, diary entries, and extended passages of storytelling that resemble prose poems, the book's central characters are Victor Joseph and Thomas Builds-the-Fire, two young Native-American men living on a Spokane Indian Reservation. The stories describe their relationships, desires, and histories with family members and others who live on the reservation along with pervasive addiction, frequent car accidents, and basketball. Each provides some insight into the distance and estrangement between men and women, Indians and Whites, reservation Indians and urban Indians, and modern Indians from the traditions of their past. While some of the characters experience success, most are stuck in place, isolated, bitter, and fiercely (and perhaps ironically, given their situations) proud; there is a lot of material here to use to talk about ways poverty, racism, and low expectations affect individual outcomes. This book has been described as the Native American equivalent of Black writer Richard Wright's 1940's Native Son, and was the basis for the film Smoke Signals. This version includes an updated introduction from the author where he reminisces about how his life changed when (against incredible odds) his first book of poems was published and given a glowing review in the New York Times Book Review; it also includes two new additional stories.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Systems

Maus: A Survivor's Tale (Parts 1 & 2)

Art Spiegelman (*Author, Illustrator*)
Pantheon Books: 1993

This pair of graphic novels by an American cartoonist is characterized as a mix of literary genres—from memoir to biography, history, fiction, and autobiography and is the first graphic novel to win a Pulitzer Prize. The story takes place on two intertwined timelines: one in 1978 in New York, where the emotionally troubled author interviews his father (a Polish Jew and Holocaust Survivor) about his experiences; the other begins in the 1930s and is the author's father's story. The use of animals to depict different ethnic groups: the Jews as mice, Germans, as cats, non-Jewish Poles, as pigs, French, as frogs, etc. should be discussed as ethnic stereotypes (characterizations associated with negative ethnic connotations). The story revolves around the author's difficult relationship with his father, the absence of his mother (who

committed suicide), and his father's destruction of his wife's diaries (the accounts of her life in Auschwitz). The layers of dysfunctional relationships revealed provide a means to focus on family relationships (e.g. between father and stepmother, author and his stepmother, and the author and his French wife) or to highlight the long term inter-generational impact of war, grief, loss, and post traumatic stress, and the cost of survival. Each short book is multi-layered; the graphic format is likely to appeal to reluctant readers and offers a different view of this particular period in history.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems, Violence

Mexican White Boy

Matt de la Peña (*Author*)

Ember (January 12, 2010)

Biracial (Mexican and White) Danny Lopez doesn't think he fits in anywhere—he isn't "White enough" for his private school, or "Mexican enough" for barrio life. Growing up in San Diego, close to the Mexican border, everyone makes assumptions about him because of his skin color—but he can't speak Spanish and his mother is White. The lanky boy's skills as a pitcher are guaranteed to get him into college, but his lack of confidence and self-control consistently undermine his performance on the field. He is cut from the team of his upscale private school, where no one seems to expect much of him. Danny's identity crisis, along with deeper social issues related to class and race, seem to have him on a road to failure. Convinced that his "Whiteness" drove his father to abandon his family and return to Mexico, Danny decides to spend the summer with Mexican relatives in his dad's old neighborhood. He soon realizes the skills and privilege he has can lead him toward a brighter future. His process of self discovery opens him up to a surprising friendship with a boy named Uno, whose father is Black and mother is Mexican: both have absent fathers they long to be with and are being raised by their mothers. Set in the alleys and on the ball fields of San Diego County (where wealthy White residents inhabit plush beachfront property just miles from the border with impoverished Tijuana), this story explores themes of friendship, acceptance, poverty, and the struggle to find your identity without being limited by its connotation. It will appeal to struggling readers (particularly boys interested in the sports angle). Danny's desperate need to find his niche and his longing to find his identity will ring true with a broader base of teens, particularly those of mixed racial heritage and the authentic language, dialects and rich depiction of the neighborhoods will also appeal to students. This book raises the sensitive issue of self-harm, mostly associated with girls. The Biracial theme is particularly relevant since the election of the its first Biracial US president, who also faced many of the same hardships described here, and where racial identity is no longer fixed to one race or another. Also available in electronic and audio formats (the latter of which carefully and accurately captures the different characters' inflections and dialects).

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Systems, Team-Building

Mississippi Trial: 1955

Chris Crowe (*Author*)

Dial: 2002

The compelling first line of this historic novel: “My dad hates hate.” will pull readers in, and the story, based on actual events surrounding the brutal kidnapping and murder of Emmett Till (a Black teen from Chicago), will keep them reading. The fictional protagonist, Hiram Hillburn, has resented his Civil-Rights-minded father ever since his family moved from their home in Greenwood, MS, to a liberal-minded Arizona college-town. Seven years later, in the summer of 1955, sixteen-year-old Hiram is looking forward to returning to Mississippi to visit his aging grandfather. In Greenwood, he renews a childhood acquaintance with R.C. Rydell, a redneck bully, and develops a crush on R.C.’s sister. The White teen also happens to cross paths with fourteen-year-old Emmett Till, a Black teenager who is also visiting for the summer; Hiram begins to recognize how the White townspeople treat Blacks who they feel fail to “know their place.” When Emmett’s disfigured, tortured body is found floating in the river, Hiram immediately suspects that R.C. was involved and is determined to find out. But the knowledge comes at a cost when (at the end) he learns that it was his grandfather, not R.C., who helped the murderers. Events force Hiram to question his willingness to stand up for his beliefs and to reevaluate his understanding of the animosity between his grandfather and father. Descriptions of the climate, food, and landscape of the Deep South are vivid and racial attitudes from the period are accurately portrayed (from Hiram’s grandfather, to R.C. and his sister, to the White lawyers who mock the Black witnesses they cross-examine). Students may find Hiram a bit naïve, not because he sees his bigoted grandfather’s good qualities, but because he seems unaware of either the pall of racial tension and hatred that pervade the region, and the racism that has caused the rift between his father and grandfather. All of those points, (along with details about the murder and trial) can be used to encourage students to consider the moral and ethical dilemmas Hiram faces and the impact of racism then and now. More than 100,000 people attended the open-casket viewing and funeral service for Emmet Till, considered the first large-scale media event of the Civil Rights movement; the nationally publicized trial and subsequent acquittal of his murderers, J. W. Milam and Roy Bryant, set in motion a course of events that altered US history. This book can be used in tandem with Death of Innocence: The Story of the Hate Crime That Changed America (Random House: 2003), civil rights activist Mamie Till-Mobley’s memoir of the events surrounding her son’s horrific murder and how she moved from the brink of suicide to become an inspiring teacher and activist. A quote from an interview with Till-Mobley might provide an interesting way to spark discussion or a writing assignment about courage, hope, or change: “... I am experienced, but not cynical. . . . I am hopeful that we all can be better than we are. I’ve been brokenhearted, but I still maintain an oversized capacity for love.” While the reading level is appropriate for most middle-school students, the use of profanity and racial epithets may be considered inappropriate for younger readers. Available in electronic and audio formats.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems, Violence

Moloka’i

Alan Brennert (*Author*)

St. Martin’s Griffin: 2004

The population of the Hawaiian islands remained isolated for centuries until the late 1700s, when Britain’s Captain Cook first “discovered” them. Their isolation kept the islanders from developing natural immunity to many of the diseases brought to their shores by foreign explorers, traders and missionaries, making

them unusually susceptible to contagious diseases such as leprosy (which had been prevalent in Europe and Asia for over two thousand years, and for which there was no cure). By the late 1800s, when the disease (a bacterial infection known formally as Hansen's Disease) became epidemic on the islands, public health inspectors routinely inspected the skin of adults and schoolchildren alike. Anyone found with the signs of leprosy was confined in a hospital for short time for observation, then banished for life to a leper colony where a life of shameful isolation, disfigurement and death was expected. Set in Hawaii beginning in 1891 and based on actual events, the author tells the life story of a fictional child—a spirited seven-year-old Hawaiian girl, named Rachel Kalama, who dreamt of someday visiting far-off lands like her father, a merchant seaman. When first her Uncle Pono, and then Rachel are diagnosed with the disease (a benign looking rose-colored skin discoloration) she is immediately separated from her family and sent to the quarantine camp at Kalaupapa, on the island of Moloka'i. Though family and friends could accompany patients, they would also be banished and never permitted to return home (due to fear of contagion)—so the disease was the source of shame for most families. Confined to the girls section of the children's compound (a sterile hospital dormitory and school) Rachel is prohibited from having contact her Uncle "for her own safety." While her symptoms remain mild, she spends her childhood watching peers die from the disease with little companionship or affection from the mostly terrified adults who care for them. Rachel is a survivor and ultimately marries a fellow islander Kenji Utagawa; they are overjoyed when they have a daughter, but are heartbroken when they are forced to give her up—first to be isolated for a year of quarantine, and then put up for adoption to prevent infection. The pair copes with the loss of their daughter and settles into a productive working life until Kenji tries to stop a fight and is tragically killed. Rachel manages to spend the ensuing years coping with the limitations of the devastating illness by caring for others. The poignant ending follows an aging Rachel's final years after sulfa drugs are discovered as a cure, leaving her free to abandon Moloka'i and seek out her family and her long-lost daughter. Readers will learn about the ostracism and shame that are byproducts of this devastating medical condition (which continues to exist in pockets throughout the world, including the US), fears and prejudices of people of this age and the cruel customs that rose from them, the sacrifices made by families and missionaries sent to treat victims, and more. The central message of this book revolves around questions about the ethical and humane ways to treat victims of illnesses such as Hansen's Disease—or AIDS, E-Bola, and other incurable and contagious diseases that exist around the world. This is a story of tragedy, human rights, loss of hope and the will to survive and be "normal." The book provides some insight into the rich culture of the Hawaiian people, the fall of their monarchy, loss of culture and country to US colonialism and business ventures (Dole), and the bombing of Pearl Harbor. John Trayman's nonfiction account, The Colony provides additional background information. Available in electronic and audio formats.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Global Citizenship, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Serving the Community, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems, Violence

Monster

Walter Dean Myers (*Author*), Christopher Myers (*Illustrator*)
HarperCollins: 2009

Written in a combination journal and screenplay format, this first person narrative is the story of sixteen-year-old Steve Harmon, who has been indicted, jailed and is on trial for felony murder. Identified as the lookout for a robbery that resulted in the shooting death of a Harlem drugstore owner, it soon becomes clear that whether he is found guilty or innocent, Steve is a pawn in a system filled with cynical authority figures, biased jurors, and unscrupulous inmate "snitches." For the first time, a terrified Steve is forced to think about who he is as he faces prison, where he may spend the next twenty-five years to life if

convicted. A bright and aspiring filmmaker in his high school, Steve uses his talents to transcribe the events of his trial into a script—as a way to try to make sense of what is happening and to cope with his spiraling emotions. Scene by scene, he captures the way his life changed in an instant, his mother’s anguish, his fear, the treatment of inmates, how society views him as a young Black teen and how he sees himself, and the prosecutors assertion that Steve is a “Monster.” With the help of his lawyer, and support from his mother, father, and little brother, Steve must try to prove to the jury he is innocent. But he’s not even sure anymore. The trauma of the trial has blurred his sense of reality until he can no longer sort out what is real or true, or who he really is. While the reader is able to get into Steve’s head and feel his emotions, we never learn whether or not he committed the crime he’s accused of and the ending is ambivalent—leaving each reader to make up his or her own mind and to debate the extent of Steve’s guilt or innocence. This is a novel about betrayal, hope and promise lost, reflections on ones past and future; and captures real emotions in a genuine way (a big plus for teachers working with high school aged boys who tend to cover their inner lives with bravado and tough talk); and can provide a means to launch conversations about gender-role stereotypes for boys and expectations society has for Black youth. There are many opportunities for discussion, debate and writing and learning. Students should examine themes like peer pressure, how we make personal choices, integrity, different degrees of guilt, why good kids get into trouble and what happens to incarcerated youth jailed with hardened criminals. The author raises many questions about what is right and wrong, what makes someone a monster, and whether you are only guilty if you commit the crime. The dialogue contains profanity and there are scenes of implied violent and sexual content (gang initiation, sexual assault, murder), and thoughts of suicide. This book also contains interesting extra materials including an interview with the author about the book (who died in July of 2014), his life and writing; a list of books that influenced him (as a young Black man); reader’s guide questions. Students may be interested to learn that the author wrote about lives and incidents that reflected his own experiences and often stated that his goal was to make young people stop and think about their choices. The black and white illustrations by Christopher Myers (the author’s son) are a great addition to this unique text and will add to students’ interest and enjoyment. Consider this book as a jumping-off point to help students learn to read and write a screenplay—it reads like a play script, and students may need help becoming familiar with the abbreviations and format (though the text itself is not difficult and is recommended for reluctant readers). Also available in electronic and audio formats, but it is suggested that teachers choose the written version (perhaps using the audio format to reinforce reading for students who have poor literacy skills).

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Social Responsibility, Social Systems, Violence

Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave

Frederick Douglass (*Author*)

Dover Publications (Unabridged edition): 1995

This very short narrative first-hand account of the brutality of slavery was written by the legendary abolitionist. In this first and most frequently read of his three autobiographies, Douglass provides graphic descriptions of the deprivation and physical abuse of his childhood, the horrifying experiences and tragedy he endured as a slave, and his dramatic escape to the North and eventual freedom. His life is all the more remarkable in that he overcame these obstacles and went on to become an impassioned abolitionist, brilliant writer, newspaper editor and eloquent orator whose speeches fired the abolitionist cause until his death in 1895 at almost 80 years of age. Since few slaves of the period could write, Douglass published this account in 1845 to satisfy those who doubted his origins. Some students may find the accounts of

slavery disturbing though all but the most sheltered should be familiar with the practices described: separation of families, beatings, rapes, various forms of degradation and loss, lack of rights to marry or keep your children, etc. Be sure to point out similarities between actions of abolitionists, Civil Rights movement, women's suffrage and the ongoing push for equal rights for women. Refer students to practices of slavery that still go on today. Refer also to Harriet Jacob's memoir Incidents In the Life of a Slave Girl for a different perspective during this same timeframe.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems, Violence

One of Us: Conjoined Twins and the Future of Normal

Alice Domurat Drege (*Author*)

Harvard University Press: 2005

This nonfiction book is recommended for students in AP science or ethics classes or as a resource for research projects. Excerpts may be used to augment curriculum-based discussions about the rights of the disabled, issues of medical ethics, and social constructs of identity and normality. This text raises the question: Must children born with socially challenging anatomies have their bodies changed because others cannot be expected to change their minds? The text views conjoined twins and other congenital anomalies from viewpoint of people living with them. The author posits that anatomy matters because the senses we possess, the muscles we control, and the resources we require to keep our bodies alive, limit and guide what we experience. She explores the social framework what it means to be "normal." Based on an analysis of past and present case studies of conjoined twins, she offers both historical and contemporary evidence that most adult conjoined twins do not desire to be separated, and that many surgeries are carried out on children too young to object. Some portions of this text are quite graphic and include illustrations may be disturbing to some readers, or deemed inappropriate in some settings. An alternate or additional text might include Robert Bogdon's Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit (University of Chicago Press: 1990)

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Feelings, Gender Issues, Human Rights, Relationships, Respecting Differences

One Thousand Splendid Suns

Khaled Hosseini (*Author*)

Riverhead: 2007

The author of The Kite Runner takes us back to his native Afghanistan to explore the lives of two women brought together by war, religious extremism, loss and fate, and escalating violence and oppression against women in their home in Kabul. Born a generation apart, Mariam and Laila are polar opposites: Mariam is shy, subservient, naive to a fault, honest, and filled with self-doubt; Laila is beautiful, smart and kind and has very different ideas about love, family, and expectations for her future. With equal measure of despair and hope, they nevertheless form an unlikely bond that makes them both sisters and mother-daughter to each other, a process which changes the course of their own lives and those of the next generation. The central premise of this novel is that a woman's love for her family can move her to heroic acts of self-sacrifice, and love, or even the memory of love, is often the key to survival. The book not only highlights aspects of Afghani culture and the plight of women in that society, it also shines a light on

Western prejudices, issues of misogyny that transcend culture and religion, entitlement and misunderstanding, the importance of resistance, the struggle for power between politics and religion, what happens when gender becomes politicized. Use this book to encourage student debate about the role of politics and religion on the rights of women globally, the positive and/or negative role US presence in Afghanistan and other parts of the Middle East, at what point countries like the US should get involved in the social problems in other countries, etc. This book contains descriptions of violence against women (beatings, rapes, and death) and should be screened by adults to determine its appropriateness for your students. This title is also available in multiple formats,

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Global Citizenship, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Responsibility, Social Systems, Violence

Original Fire

Louise Erdich (*Author*)

Harper Perennial: 2004

Known for her award-winning novels about the struggles of Native American peoples and the government bureaucracies that further marginalize and disenfranchise them (*The Round House*, 2012), the author captures the voices and perspectives of her mixed Ojibwe and German ancestry. This book includes selected prose and poems drawn from her two previous books of poetry, *Jacklight* (1984) and *Baptism of Desire* (1989), and adds nineteen new poems. Many of her poems center around motherhood, family, death and mourning, nature, life on the reservation and also forlorn small towns; social misfits play prominently in her works. The title comes from her view of the life force that sustains us (soul or “original fire”) and she often grapples with both Native American and Christian beliefs and the friction between them. Her poems include both sensuous and bawdy references and portray a wide range of emotions.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Human Rights, Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Systems

Paint Me Like I Am: Teen Poems from Writers Corps

Compiled by Bill Aguado and Richard Newirth (*Authors*)

HarperTeen: 2003

This anthology of poems was written by a diverse group of teens who took part in writing programs run by the national nonprofit organization called WritersCorps which was formed to help at-risk youth in three urban US centers: San Francisco, Washington, DC, and the Bronx in New York City. In this slightly uneven collection of unorthodox poems (many are prose-like, some are rants, others clichéd, but some are insightful, inspiring, nuanced, and include great metaphors and descriptions) teens written and recorded words are used to explore their views and feelings about race, relationships, family and community, drugs, abuse, homelessness, and self-image. They express feelings ranging from anger and defiance to hopefulness and love. This version includes a poetic forward by Nikki Giovanni that sets the tone, an essay from poet Kevin Powell, and writing tips and exercises from WritersCorps instructors.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Systems, Violence

Passing

Nella Larsen (*Author*)

CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform: 2014

Originally published in 1929, and re-released in 2013, this novella about the Harlem Renaissance focuses on the Black bourgeoisie of the era. The two main characters, Clare Kendry and Irene Redfield, were childhood friends who lost touch when Clare's father died and she moved in with two White aunts. By hiding that Clare was part-Black, they allowed her to 'pass' as a White woman and marry a White man (who turns out to be a racist), resulting in her abandoning her true identity. In contrast, Irene lives in Harlem, and has committed herself to bettering her life as a Black woman and marries a Black doctor. The story opens as Irene refuses to open a letter she has just received for Clare. She reflects on an incident two years prior when the two Black women (who can both "pass" as White) unexpectedly cross paths in an all-White restaurant in Chicago. The novella centers on their meeting later in life, each woman fascinated and attracted by the other's daring lifestyle. The remainder of the plot details the women's strained relationship, fueled by Irene's paranoia that her husband is having an affair with Clare. Themes include: poverty, personal and national identity, racial and sexual ambiguity, and the lengths to which people go to secure personal happiness; it can be used as a contrast to *The Great Gatsby* (originally published four years before this work). Nella Larsen (1891-1964) was a Biracial American novelist of the Harlem Renaissance; though she wrote only two novels and a few short stories, she was acclaimed both in her time and in the present.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Human Rights, Relationships, Respecting Differences, Serving the Community, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems

Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood

Marjane Satrapi (*Author/Illustrator*)

Pantheon: 2004

An autobiography told in the format of a graphic novel, the author tells her of her life during the Islamic Revolution in Iran. A daughter of privilege (she is descended from the last Emperor of Iran) and child of radical parents, Marji tells the story of her childhood, beginning at the age of nine, with the ousting of the Shah and Islamic revolution of 1979, which reintroduced a religious state. Marji's parents, especially her freethinking mother, modeled a strong belief in freedom and equality, while her French education gave her a strong faith in God. The Marxist-inclined family initially favored the overthrow of the Shah, but soon realized that the new regime was more restrictive and unfair than the last. Marji's parents struggle to educate their daughter and, at the age of fourteen, her fierce independence and the Iran-Iraq war force them to send her to Austria for her safety. While the artwork is starkly minimalist and often humorous, Marji depicts the madness around her, idolizing the martyrs imprisoned by the Shah and fascinated by the details of their torture, bombings, death of playmates, etc. She forms a close bond with her Uncle Anoosh, only to have him imprisoned and killed by the new regime. This child's-eye view of war shows Marji's normal rebelliousness, her shifting ideals as she matures, and her family's pride and love for their country despite the tumultuous times. With the continuing war and upheaval in the Arab World and Middle East, and the struggle between secular and extremist Muslims, this book continues to be relevant. It emphasizes the human cost of war and political repression and the human need to carry on and try to maintain normalcy in the face of the absurd. Some criticism of this book is that the author "glosses over" certain details regarding the culpability of her parent's allegedly communist leanings and motives. While that is a potential point to raise with students, it would be important to make sure they have enough

background about the complex social/political problems that existed in order to have that level of discussion. Teachers should screen this text, which does contain profanity and an illustration of a man urinating on a prisoner.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Global Citizenship, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems, Violence

Push

Sapphire (*Author*)

Vintage: 1997

Claireece Precious Jones endures unimaginable hardships in her young life: she is bullied and physically and sexually abused by her mother, raped by her father, she grows up poor in Harlem, is angry, illiterate, morbidly obese, “ugly”, HIV-positive, unloved, suicidal, and generally unnoticed by all but her abusers. The story of her life, told through her own halting dialect, is intense, baldly graphic and horrific—but it is also inspiring and hopeful—and will hold the interest of teens from many backgrounds and reading levels. At the outset of the novel, sixteen-year-old Precious is pregnant for the second time with her father's child (her first was born when she was only twelve and has Down's Syndrome) and still languishing in middle school. Referred to an alternative school by her principal, Precious is paired with a dedicated and caring teacher (Ms. Rain). For the first time in her life, Precious experiences real nurturing and finally feels she belongs somewhere. Ms. Rain's combination of inspiration and cajoling is also Precious' first experience with being challenged to succeed. Through the kindness of others, she realizes that she is not alone and, as she gradually learns to write. Precious is also able to express her long-suppressed feelings and dreams about a future that holds some promise. She finds a connection and community with her classmates, but especially with the dedicated Ms. Rain, whose quiet lesbian lifestyle remains an intense curiosity to Precious. As her language skills improve, Precious finds sustenance in writing poetry, and in the friendships made in support groups for other incest survivors and for HIV-positive teens. The ending, where Precious and her classmates share excerpts from their journals, adds further realism and presents a wider perspective of the teens' experiences and growth. Precious is a remarkable and unforgettable heroine. This book contains profanity, extremely graphic depictions of child abuse, incest, and homophobia. The title encompasses the essence of what it means to struggle, and survive. There is also an award-winning movie (on DVD) based on this book: Push: Based on the Novel by Sapphire, directed by Lee Daniels and written by Damien Paul that might be used as a follow-up to reading the book or to encourage extension activities.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Human Rights, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Systems, Violence

Rash

Pete Hautman (*Author*)

Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers: 2007

It is 2076, and in the United Safer States of America helmets and health food are de rigueur, verbal abuse, obesity, and dangerous activities are outlawed, and sports are either illegal or radically changed to prevent possible injury. A national obsession with safety has criminalized even minor "antisocial impulses," such as

"road rage." As a result, over twenty-four percent of the population is incarcerated and responsible for doing most of the country's (unpaid) manual labor. When sixteen-year-old Bo Marsten is falsely accused of spreading a rash around his school, he loses his temper—and his anger issues cause him to be sentenced to one of the country's privatized penal colonies. There, he makes pizzas for McDonald's until the camp's sadistic overseer recruits him to play on an illegal high-stakes prison football team and in exchange is given the opportunity to reduce his sentence. Bo, a gifted athlete, finds the brutally violent game exhilarating—and slowly begins to question his culture's basic assumptions that safety is more important than freedom. Part Harrison Bergeron and part Holes, this dystopian sports thriller offers ample material for students to consider a host of topics from teen angst, to bullying and exclusion, incarceration, social norms, peer pressure and snitching, gender role stereotypes, winning at any cost, ethics, social activism, human rights, and more. The layered plot may be challenging for some readers, but most students will find the story-line and characters engaging.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems, Violence

Red Hot Salsa: Bilingual Poems on Being Young and Latino in the United States

Lori Marie Carlson and Oscar Hijuelos (*Authors*)

Henry Holt and Co: 2005/2010

This collection of dozens of poems is written by both well-known and emerging writers, including some New York City public high school students. They appear in both English and Spanish; most are translated by the poets themselves, or are written in a blend of languages. Each poem reveals something about the writer's personal experiences and perspectives, their families, how they live, and their hopes for the future. Poems are grouped into loose topical categories and address concepts like language, families and neighborhood, love, identity, expectations, boundaries, bias and stereotypes, the challenges of being bi-cultural, emotions, and success ("victories"). Teens from all backgrounds will relate to the emotions and experiences expressed and will find these appealing. An appended glossary will also assist English speakers. This collection should be screened for sexual and adult themes.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences

Rose that Grew From Concrete, The

Tupac Shakur (*Author*)

MTV Books: 1999

This collection of posthumously-discovered poetry was written by the rapper Tupac Shakur between 1989 and 1991, when he was just a teen and had yet to become famous. The poems are passionate, sometimes angry, compelling and hopeful; together, they offer a glimpse into the thoughts and insights of being a young Black man, and highlight his talent with words. Many are presented in Shakur's own handwriting, complete with his distinctive spelling, use of ideographs (e.g. a drawing of an eye for I, etc.), scratch outs and corrections, and (except for one) are also presented in typed text. Some poems are also accompanied by his drawings, and a few black-and-white photographs appear throughout. This edition includes a preface by the rapper's mother, a foreword by author Nikki Giovanni, and an introduction by his manager, Leila Steinburg, in whose writing group the poems were written. Shakur's ability to express himself was his trademark and contributed to his celebrity and success in the hip-hop world prior to his murder in 1996 at

the age of twenty-five. Students today will continue to relate to his insights about struggles many teens have to overcome, letting them know they are not alone. Consider reading with [Hip Hop and the Classics](#).

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Systems, Violence

Ruined

Lynn Nottage (*Author*)

Theatre Communications Group: 2009

This play raises awareness about the effects of the Congolese civil war and the plight of women and families caught in the middle. The scene is a rain forest bar and brothel in the war-torn Congo. The formidable Mama Nadi keeps peace between customers from both sides of the conflict, as government soldiers and rebel forces alike choose from her inventory of women, many already “ruined” by rape and torture by soldiers and forced into a life of prostitution. Inspired by interviews she conducted in Africa with Congolese refugees, the author has created this intensely engrossing drama. The format is easy to read, though teachers may find it helpful to have students create a “map” of characters. This play raises many issues about the effect of war, the rights and treatment of women globally, whether Mama Nadi was exploiting the women in her brothel or offering them an option in terrible situation. Another key question relates to the pressure to “choose sides” in a revolution when both sides commit terrible atrocities and how one determines which side is “right.” This play should be screened for appropriateness due to its graphic subject matter and “adult” themes and content. This title is also available in acting edition (Dramatists Play Service, Inc.: 2010), not reviewed, and in electronic format.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Global Citizenship, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Social Systems, Violence

Shawshank Redemption: The Shooting Script

Frank Darabont and Stephen King (*Authors*)

Newmarket Press: 2004

Andy Dufresne is a young and successful banker whose life changes drastically when he is convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment in a maximum security facility for the murder of his wife and her lover. Based on Stephen King’s novel and set in the 1940’s, the script follows Andy and Red, his inmate friend and prison entrepreneur and “fixer” over a period of twenty years. It soon becomes clear that maintaining hope and dreams are essential survival skills for prison, and in life—both are “deep inside” where no one can get to them. Andy’s imaginative spirit, determination, courage and sense of hope sustain him, while Red’s lack of hope and faith mean that (even after his release after forty years in prison, he is never truly free. The themes of this film classic include unfair imprisonment, escape, hope, survival, friendship, and the meaning of freedom. This edition includes introductions by both authors, an analysis of the script-to-screen changes, photos, storyboards, and an interesting “Memo from the Trenches” by Frank Darabont. Students who enjoy this format may also be interested in reading the scrupulously faithful screenplay version of [The Green Mile](#) (by the same authors and published by Simon & Schuster: 2000) (not reviewed).

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Social Responsibility, Violence

She's Come Undone

Wally Lamb (*Author*)

Washington Square Press; 1996

Dolores Price may be witty and wise-mouthed, but she is also fragile and deeply-wounded. The novel follows her life from around age four until she is a grown woman of about forty. Through Dolores' narrative of wry and self-deprecating observations, we learn that she is the troubled daughter of a stormy marriage and so stressed that she is already sipping Maalox in grade school. Her violent, philandering father is a liar who walks out on his family—causing his already unstable wife to spiral into a complete emotional breakdown and sending Dolores to live with her repressive grandmother in Rhode Island. By the time thirteen-year-old Dolores reaches eighth grade, she has only one friend: a boarder who eventually rapes her. Depressed and unloved, Dolores anesthetizes herself against her pain through a combination of junk food and soap operas, supplied by her anxious and emotionally unavailable mother. Obese and isolated, she attempts suicide during her first semester in college and spends the next seven years in a mental institution. While perhaps not a typical choice to promote cultural competence, this novel had been included because of its focus on a character suffering from the effects of abuse, and the accurate portrayal of her struggles with mental illness and obesity—both of which are heavily stigmatized in our society. Teens will find Dolores' profound alienation and self-loathing relatable—she blames herself for things that have happened to her and has so little self-respect that she feels she deserves her pain. Students will have strong opinions about Dolores—and their thoughts about whether or not they find her to be a likeable or sympathetic character (and why they feel that way) will reveal a lot about them. The ending may be somewhat clichéd, but the book raises many important points for guided discussion with an adult: the impact of choices we make, the legacy of mental illness and internalizing a “victim” mentality, finding love, the value (and purpose) of forgiveness in healing, finding hope and purpose from a lifetime of trauma. Adults should screen this novel for appropriateness due to mature themes. This title is available in multiple formats.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Human Rights, Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Systems, Violence

Slave: My True Story

Mende Nazur and Damien Lewis (*Authors*)

PublicAffairs: 2009

Born into the Karko tribe in the Nuba mountains of northern Sudan, the author shares her somber memoir that reminds us that slavery does still exist. The book begins with a description of Nazur's early life, portrayed as an idyllic childhood. She describes her typical rural Sudanese village where cattle and farming have provided a livelihood for centuries. Ancient tribal traditions also contributed to a sense of identity, though slow changes are beginning to occur: while the village had recently stopped using ceremonial scarring to “enhance” the beauty of the men and women, they still practiced witchcraft alongside their Muslim faith, as well the barbaric practice of “female circumcision” (which Nazur endured). Nazur portrays herself as intelligent and headstrong, and her people as peaceful, generous and kind. When Nazur was approximately twelve, her village was attacked by Arab raiders in the middle of the night, resulting in the slaughter of many villagers and the kidnapping of thirty one children (mostly girls) between ages of eight and twelve. The captive children, including Mende, were further traumatized by sexual abuse at the hands of their captors, and then sold into domestic and sexual slavery. Ms. Nazur was sent to the Sudanese capital of Khartoum where she became the domestic slave for a wealthy Arab family, where the

superficial trappings of a modern upper middle class life (even a spoon) were overwhelming and alien to her. But these “luxuries” are all the more shocking juxtaposed with the cruelty of her treatment. She is referred to as “Yebit,” or “Black slave,” and in turn must refer to the family as “master.” Nazur was subjected to appalling physical, sexual, and mental abuse, forced to sleep in a shed and eat leftover food like an animal. She had no rights or freedom—her every move was controlled by her owners. Mende's story might never have come to light if, after some seven years, she had not been sent to work for the family's relative—a high-profile Sudanese diplomat working in London. It was there that Nazur made her dramatic escape to freedom while taking out the trash and (with the help of co-author Lewis) was able to tell her story and eventually gain asylum. (Her story took another dramatic turn when British government initially refused her asylum and threatened to return her to Sudan; they later gave into pressure by human-rights groups and in 2003 allowed her to stay). This first-hand account of what it is like to be a modern-day slave removes the sense of distance we can feel when confronted by media coverage about third-world abuses. Many students are likely to feel disbelief and outrage about the abuses Mende endured, so be prepared to help them find ways they can get involved in helping to solve some of the problems described (by working with or contributing to organizations like [Human Rights Watch](#), [Unicef](#), [Half the Sky Movement](#), [Amnesty International](#), and [The Malala Fund](#)). This book opens the door to talk about human rights violations and the oppression of girls and women globally, the role that politics, religion and social norms play in their treatment, controversial practices like female circumcision, the price of a human life, and beyond. This book contains graphic content and descriptions and is available in a variety of formats.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Global Citizenship, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Respecting Differences, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems, Violence

Snitch

Allison Van Diepan (*Author*)

Simon Pulse (November 27, 2007)

This book addresses several issues often raised by faculty and administrators in large urban school districts: gang violence, peer pressure, and the culture of (not) “snitching.” Though it is not great literature, this book looks at the complexities of these problems and most students will find some aspect of the story or characters they can relate to and it can be used as a catalyst for discussing these complex problems. The story follows seventeen-year-old Julia Divino, a beautiful Biracial girl (Puerto Rican-Italian) who is an A-student and aspiring poet. Julia is a relatively “good girl” who has plans to go to college after graduating from her violent, Queens, NY high school. Julia has vowed never to join a gang, and so far she and her friends have managed to steer clear of them—Julia has seen what has happened to friends “in the life.” When Julia meets the handsome and mysterious newcomer Eric Valiente, she finds herself swept off her feet by his bad-boy persona. But Eric has secrets of his own that he's not willing to share and before long, has joined the “Crips” gang, going against everything Julia believes in. When Eric begins to lie to her, Julia breaks up with him, but later gives him a subtle warning when she learns that a rival “Bloods” gang is going to ambush him. Overnight, she is considered a snitch and loses all of her friends. She realizes she can't stay neutral between the rival gangs anymore and decides, for her own protection, and against Eric's pleadings, to join the Crips. When several of the Crip gang leaders are subsequently busted in a police raid, all eyes again turn to Julia and Eric as the snitches. The book ends with an interesting twist. The author realistically depicts the world of so-called gangbangers and the insidious nature of lifelong protection, with no escape. The language is generally authentic, though some slang feels overused. Julia and Eric are authentic characters and though their own stories offer hope, their friends are not so lucky.

Though this is an easy enough read for students in grades 6-8, it contains profanity and depiction of gang violence, drug use, sexual language (and off-page sexual activity) that some teachers may feel is not appropriate for use with their students (particularly students below Grade 9). It is likely to appeal to reluctant readers (though perhaps more to girls than boys). Aside from the obvious topics about snitching, gang violence (and the effects it has on families and communities as a whole), this book supplies ample materials to engage students in conversations about dating relationships, friendship and peer pressure, and family connections.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Systems, Violence

Snow Falling on Cedars

David Guterson (*Author*)

Vintage: 1995

This novel is set in 1954 on the small isolated (fictional) island of San Piedro, in Washington's Puget Sound. It is a lush place populated by hard-working islanders, where salmon fishing and strawberry farms are the mainstays of the local economy. No one who lives there can afford to make enemies, so when a local fisherman is found suspiciously drowned, and a Japanese American named Kabuo Miyamoto is charged with his murder, the ensuing trial causes painful memories, old rivalries, and past injustices to bubble back to the surface. Those memories include a tender love affair between a White boy and the Japanese girl who later became Kabuo's wife, and the memory of what happened to the island's substantial Japanese residents in the aftermath of Pearl Harbor, when they were exiled into internment camps as their neighbors stood by. The narrator, Ishmael Chambers, publishes the only newspaper on the island and is the other half of the illicit interracial teen romance with Kabuo's wife, Hatsue, who he remains fixated on). Many of the scenes are revealed as flashbacks that weave past and present together until the surprising ending. The scenery of the Pacific Northwest and this island (a stand-in for Bainbridge Island) is accurately captured in rich descriptions. There are some graphic descriptions of sexual activity that some teachers may deem inappropriate in some settings or with students younger than Grade 11 or 12). Aside from the social justice and human rights themes, this book can be used to explore relationships, power and privilege, and restitution. Available in electronic and audio formats and as a feature film on DVD (which has many shortcomings, compared to the book).

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences

Sold

Patricia McCormick (*Author*)

Disney Hyperion: 2010

Thirteen-year-old Lakshmi lives with her family in a small hut on a mountain in Nepal. Though the family is by all standards desperately poor, Lakshmi takes pleasure in simple things, like playing hopscotch with her best friend at school, having her mother brush her hair each night, and thinking about the boy she will marry. When a monsoon destroys the family's home and crops, her gambler-stepfather demands that she help support her family by working as a maid. The naïve girl welcomes the opportunity to work in the city and send money back home, but she has actually been sold by her stepfather into a life of prostitution—to

the glamorous stranger who assures her that he she will find her a job as a maid. She travels far across the border into India, and arrives in the slums of Calcutta to a place hopefully named Happiness House. When she discovers what is expected of her in the brothel, she refuses to submit, and her resistance is punished: she is locked up, beaten, starved, drugged, and finally raped, until she surrenders to her fate. Mumtaz, the cruel old woman who runs the brothel, promises Lakshmi that she can leave once her family's debt (for her care) is paid, but then cheats her of her meager earnings so that her debt continues to grow, and Lakshmi realizes she can never leave. Sustained by her mother's words: "*Simply to endure is to triumph*," she gradually forms friendships with the other girls and the teenage son of one of the workers who teaches her to read—connections that allow her to endure her daily existence. When an American comes to the brothel to rescue girls, fear keeps Lakshmi from trusting or acting—but she is finally given a sense of hope. While her fate is left unresolved at the end of the book, the fact that she is learning English and to assert herself hints at a positive outcome for her future. While the reading level of this novella's spare language and short vignettes are accessible to students in Grades 6-8, the subject materials and grim heart-wrenching graphic descriptions make it more appropriate for older readers. Part of the author's research for this novel included interviews with women in brothels in Nepal and India. Those details are incorporated into the characters and plot; and the author has dedicated the book to them. This is another book that is likely to motivate students to take some action—so be sure to have some resources (e.g., [Himalayan Foundation](http://www.himalayan-foundation.org)^{lii} includes a project to address sex trafficking in Nepal as does [Half the Sky Movement](http://www.halftheskymovement.org)^{liii}). Reports on modern slavery and additional information about this topic are available through the [Walk Free Foundation's report](http://www.walkfreefoundation.org/report/)^{liv}.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Global Citizenship, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems, Violence

Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down, The: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures

Anne Fadiman (*Author*)

Farrar, Straus and Giroux: 2012

This book (or excerpts from it) is recommended for advanced readers (including AP English, science, psychology, or social anthropology classes). Originally published in 1997, this work of nonfiction journalism tells about the tragic life of Lia Lee, a Hmong child born with severe epilepsy in 1981 in California, the thirteenth child of recent refugees from war-torn Laos. Lia's parents (poor, uneducated, and superstitious ethnic Hmong), spoke no English and were struggling to cope in a modern mechanized country while using traditional spiritual healing methods to try to treat their infant daughter's condition. The team of American doctors who eventually treat Lia are dedicated and educated, but also culturally uninformed, linguistically unequipped, and lacking in social resources. A "perfect storm" of culture clashes that neither the family nor the medical establishment are equipped to overcome, leads to a series of ill-conceived and ultimately insensitive decisions. In 1988, after seven years of confusing and disruptive trial and error, Lia is left brain-dead and living at home in a permanent vegetative state, the result of a tragic cycle of over-medication. The central point of the book is that Lia is less a victim of her disorder than of

lii <http://www.himalayan-foundation.org>

liii www.halftheskymovement.org

liv <http://www.globalslaveryindex.org/report/?download>

miscommunication stemming from the cultural barriers between Western and Eastern medicine, how each group views patients in different ways, the tug of war between education and superstition, the lack of information about Hmong culture, and the result of a complete communication breakdown. Though both doctors and family wanted what was best for Lia, the lack of understanding and communication between them led to tragedy. This fifteenth anniversary edition includes a new afterword by the author, providing updates on the major characters, along with reflections on how they have changed Fadiman's life and attitudes. Some background about the Hmong people will help students better understand this book, and the situation of Indochinese refugees of the 1970-80s following the Vietnam War and the Laotian Civil War: The Hmong people in America are mainly refugee families who supported the CIA military efforts in Laos. They are a clannish group with a firmly established culture that views physical health as closely connected to a deep sense of spirituality (that was deemed primitive by Western standards). Merced, CA, has a large Hmong community, but at the time Lia Lee was born, there were few resources to help families bridge the many cultural and linguistic gaps they faced, or to facilitate better understanding and communication with the rest of the community. Some of the questions raised include: whether people of a dominant culture have the right to impose their beliefs (or medical treatment) on minority group? Should immigrants be expected to abandon their practices and cultural views in order to assimilate? At what point were the families treatments "neglectful" or "harmful"? Do you believe that parents were well represented in this story? Were doctors demonized by this account? What elements of "cultural sensitivity" were missing? What supports might have helped the family and/or doctors?

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Global Citizenship, Human Rights, Respecting Differences, Serving the Community, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems

Stupid Fast: The Summer I Went From a Joke to a Jock

Geoff Herbach (*Author*)

Sourcebooks Fire: 2011

Felton Reinstein is different. He wants to be a comedian, but doesn't think he's funny enough. The formerly puny and unpopular butt of jokes suddenly goes through some big changes during the summer of his sophomore year of high school: first, he has a tremendous growth spurt that makes him the envy of all the jocks and gym teachers at school (and he's now on the football team); second, the girl of his dreams has moved into a house on his paper route and wants him to kiss her. This first-person narrative is filled with hilarious quips, anecdotes and insights, but we soon learn that Felton uses his infectious humor to cover his pain and the source of his family's dysfunction. The reason that his new-age hippy mom is unraveling and is closeted in her bedroom in front of the TV, and that his prodigy of a little brother has stopped playing piano in favor of dressing up as a pirate is that Felton's dad committed suicide—and Felton is the one who found him hanging in the garage. But Felton can barely figure himself out, let alone deal with his mother's breakdown and apparent disdain for him, and he doesn't think he's the one to parent his little brother, whose behavior is becoming increasingly more bizarre. In addition to humor, he keeps himself sane by acknowledging he has to keep moving forward (whether running, biking, or lifting weights). When things reach a breaking point, we see just what Felton is made from! The author takes us into the mind of a teenage boy—an average kid who's full of contradictions (nice one minute and a jerk the next; awkward and confused, then confident). Themes cover a little bit of everything from the normal challenges of growing up and the physical changes of puberty, to dealing with death and family dysfunction, to interracial romance. This book will certainly entertain and resonate with some boys (and even give them a platform to talk about feelings that they might normally tuck away, or to speculate about why boys don't share their feelings)—but it may be a bit of a turnoff for some boys who don't relate to being "jocks" or to some girls. This book contains a liberal amount of profanity, and though it's part of

dialogue that feels authentic, teachers need to decide if it's appropriate for their students. This title is available in multiple formats; it is also the first book in an expected trilogy about Felton (the second installment, released in 2013, was not reviewed).

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Team Building

Their Eyes Were Watching God

Zora Neale Hurston (*Author*)

Harper Perennial Modern Classics: 2006

This novel brings to life the small all-Black town of Eatonville, Florida at the turn of the twentieth century and focuses on the life and shifting fortunes of Janie Crawford, a young Biracial woman obsessed with finding true love. The citizens of Eaton feel justified in scrutinizing and judging Janie—who has married three men and been tried for the murder of one. Janie's first marriage (arranged by Janie's grandmother) is reliable but restrictive, and she longs to be free. When he threatens to kill her for not obeying him, she elopes with the suave and ambitious Joe Starks, who takes her to Eatonville. Janie soon lives in luxury when her husband is elected mayor, but again chafes under his rigid expectations of feminine behavior, and his habit of silencing her whenever she offers opinions that challenge his own. When Janie finally lashes out at her aging husband, he refuses to let her visit as he lies dying; but Janie ultimately has the last word. Although Janie plays the part of the grieving widow, she is happily single when she meets Tea Cake, a man twelve years her junior, and finds the true love she has dreamed of since childhood. Though Tea Cake is a bit of a scoundrel and a vagrant, he is fun-loving and passionate and the pair finds happiness working alongside migrant workers in the Everglades. Unfortunately for Janie, a hurricane changes her fate: as the storm rages and the couple make their escape, Tea Cake is bitten by a rabid dog while protecting his wife. When the rabies makes him turn on Janie in a fit of paranoia, she is forced to shoot her husband to protect herself. Tried and acquitted of the murder, she returns home to Eatonville. Janie reveals her story to her old friend, Phoeby—and that narration sets the frame for the novel. For teens, relationships and finding love, and gender-role expectations, are important aspects of their lives—and his book presents a platform for a variety of discussions on those topics. Generally touted as one of the author's best works, its history (and the author's) is as interesting and important as the book itself; both deserve discussion. The setting is the real town of Eatonville, established in 1887 by freed slaves and the first and oldest in the US to be continuously governed by Black-Americans. Historically, this book has been considered controversial since its release; three criticisms have been leveled about it: 1) Hurston's use of authentic Black dialect was decried by fellow Renaissance author and rival Richard Wright who claimed it reinforced negative stereotypes about Black Americans;; 2) initial audiences rejected it because of its strong unapologetic Black female protagonist (and one who did not "know her place") ; and 3) though she doesn't ignore the impact of race, Hurston, unlike her male counterparts, does not write explicitly about Black people in the context of a White world—a fact that earned her scathing criticism. Students can be asked to give their own opinions about these criticisms. As a result of the furor it caused, this book remained out of print for almost thirty years before being reissued in 1978. At the height of the Harlem Renaissance during the 1930s, the author was the preeminent Black woman writer in the United States. Her stories appeared in major magazines, she consulted on Hollywood screenplays, wrote four novels, an autobiography, countless essays, and two books on Black mythology. Yet some twenty years later (by the late 1950s), Hurston was living in obscurity, working as a maid in a Florida hotel. She died in 1960 in a welfare home, buried in an unmarked grave, and quickly faded from literary consciousness. In 1975, author Alice Walker is credited with reviving interest in Hurston's works. Themes of this book include love

and cruelty, sympathy for those less fortunate, gender and racial stereotypes and role, and what it means to live properly. This title is available in multiple formats.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Systems

Things I Have To Tell You: Poems and Writing By Teenage Girls

Betsey Franco (*Editor*) Nina Nickles (*Photographer*)

Candlewick: 2001

This collection of uncensored works of prose and poetry celebrates the voices of a diverse (though almost exclusively urban, inner-city) group of thirty teen girls, their views on life and the world they live in. Topics cover questions about life, grief, anger and disillusionment, beauty, dreams and desires, relationships, and hopes for the future. Each work appears alongside a complementary black and white photograph of a multicultural group of girls and accurately captures the moods and angst of adolescence. Some works contain strong language. While this is a collection by girls (another by boys called *You Hear Me* appears below) sharing selected poems (or encouraging students to do so) from each or both collections will highlight different cultural and gender viewpoints that can help teens gain insights about each other and explore both romantic and platonic relationships. Challenge students to compare different perspectives within and across gender lines. Encourage students read these aloud rather than use the audio format. .

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Systems, Team-Building, Violence

Things They Carried, The

Tim O'Brien (*Author*)

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt: 2010

Although labeled "a work of fiction," this book combines aspects of a surreal memoir, a novel, and short story collection; though presented as a single work, it is actually a set of interconnected short pieces that can stand alone (and may be more accessible to students presented in that way). The first-person narrator (named Tim O'Brien, like the actual author) is a writer and combat veteran of the Vietnam War. The soldiers of his company—Alpha Company—are portrayed in a non-chronological account in the that spans some thirty odd years—including the late 1960's, at the height of the Vietnam War and the time before and after the war. His characters include the guilt-wracked and tormented Lt. Jimmy Cross, Henry Dobbins, Rat Kiley, Mitchell Sanders, Norman Bowker, Kiowa (the Bible-carrying Baptist Native American), and the unfortunate Tim Lavendar (who dies almost immediately). The book reveals long-lasting effects that the war has on them. The title is both symbolic of the emotional baggage the soldiers carried (their common shame, moments of cowardice, and the guilt and thrill of killing), and represents the actual talismans they carried for safety (their weapons) and luck. While there are certain parallels between the real and fictional Tim O'Brien, the book focuses on presenting different perspectives about war, not on factual accounts and challenges readers' perceptions about the conflict between fact and fiction in war—for those who were there, those who protested at home, and generations born since the war ended. It deals with the ambiguities of war and the inadequacy of words in trying to convey the experiences and alienation that Vietnam vets (and other soldiers) feel. The author has strong opinions that the images we see in films or video games or war novels give us a false sense of the realities of war and emphasizes our

responsibility to get to know individual soldiers and their experiences (not just study about wars in general) so we can really understand the impact war has. Teachers should screen this book carefully: it contains very graphic, violent and disturbing scenes. Themes to discuss include peace and war, courage and cowardice, fear and strength, longing and belonging, retribution and redemption.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Global Citizenship, Human Rights, Justice/ Injustice, Peer Relationships, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems, Team-Building , Violence

Thirteen Reasons Why

Jay Asher (*Author*)

Razorbill: 2011

Clay Jensen returns home from school to find a strange package with his name on it lying on his porch. Inside he discovers several cassette tapes recorded by Hannah Baker, his classmate and crush, who committed suicide two weeks earlier. Hannah's voice tells him that there are thirteen reasons why she decided to end her life and gives instructions about what to do next and how to pass on the packages to the next person on the list. Clay is one of them and if he listens, he'll find out why. Shocked to learn that Hannah's act was so premeditated, a distraught Clay spends a frenzied day and most of an anxious night crisscrossing his town with Hannah's voice in his ear and using her hand-drawn highlighted map as his guide, trying to figure out how he might have contributed to Hannah's death and unable to fathom how he might possibly have caused her pain. He becomes a firsthand witness to Hannah's feelings and experiences as he learns the truth according to Hannah. The text alternates, sometimes quickly, between Hannah's voice (italicized) and Clay's thoughts as he listens to her words, which illuminate betrayals and secrets that demonstrate the consequences of even small actions, and the additive nature they can have. We learn that Hannah, herself, is not free from guilt and that her own inaction played a part in a rape and an accidental auto death. While this is a compelling read—and one that appeals to a range of teens, it is important to point out some flaws that are essential to address when choosing to use this book: First, the depiction of the social worker as inept and patronizing (though well-intentioned) and the blame put on him is unfortunate—but also points out the difficulties of working with teens who are not willing to share their true feelings. Second, the book offers a contradictory (and controversial) view about the nature of the link between bullying and suicide: Hannah is portrayed as a girl who is angry and spitefully vindictive in the way she leads her thirteen "victims" through the process, rather than someone who is depressed and despairing (as most victims of suicide are). Third, while student readers relate to the message that words and actions have an impact on others, the problem (made clear in the book) is that we often don't know how our words and actions are perceived—or whether they are misinterpreted. Fourth, it is unclear what message students contemplating suicide might take away from this book (whether they would seek to emulate Hannah's strategy, recognize the pain that their loss would cause to their families and others who care about them, or evaluate the opportunities they would miss). It is essential that teachers read this book together with students and to take the time to address these important points with them. Before beginning this book, be sure to also have a plan in place to support and assist at-risk students, to discuss the signs and symptoms of suicide risk, and to discuss strategies for reaching out to friends who might be contemplating hurting themselves. Finally, since most survivors feel intense guilt about the suicide of someone they care about, it is important to reassure and comfort those individuals—that it's sometimes not possible to see the signs. This title is available in a variety of formats.

THEMES: Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Systems, Team-Building, Violence

Twelve Years a Slave

Solomon Northrop (*Author*)

Penguin: 2013

While originally published in 1853, Solomon Northrup's shocking journey from a middle class free man to becoming enslaved for twelve years before being freed and reunited with his family is a powerful story and one that can be used to talk about the history of slavery in our past or connected to examples of slavery in our current society. This unforgettable memoir was the basis for the Academy Award-winning film Twelve Years a Slave. Born in 1808 and raised as a freeman in New York, Northrup was a skilled carpenter and master violinist who had a house, a loving family, and was an educated and a respected member of his community. He was lured away from his home (apparently targeted by unscrupulous slave traders) to Washington DC, with the promise of employment as a violinist. On that trip, he was drugged, kidnapped, and sold into slavery in the deep south (New Orleans). It took twelve incredible years to find his way to freedom in 1853. These written accounts of those hard years as a slave are more graphic and disturbing than the film. His extraordinary journey proves the resiliency of hope and the human spirit despite the most grueling and formidable of circumstances. Although slave narratives existed toward the end of the antebellum period, they were rare, because few slaves were literate and a lifetime of bondage did not afford them much opportunity to record their experiences. Solomon Northup was well educated and was his liberty allowed him write and share his story. He is a talented writer and most students will find this book quite accessible.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Human Rights, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Social Responsibility & Activism, Social Systems, Violence

You Hear Me: Poems and Writing By Teenage Boys

Betsey Franco (*Editor*) Nina Nickles (*Photographer*)

Candlewick 2001

A companion to Things I Have to Tell You (a collection of prose and poems by teen girls, above), teenage boys speak out in voices that are powerful and uncensored. Seventy mostly free-verse poems and essays were gathered from a diverse (though mostly urban) group of over fifty teenage boys from across the US. The works explore their concerns about identity, love, envy, gratitude, sex, anger, competition, fear, and hope. The offerings include the expected (drugs, girls, AIDS, sex, parents) to the unexpected (vulnerability, conformity, the fear of being abandoned, their experiences of being ridiculed and ostracized, being gay, secrets and depression, and their desire to be free). Black and white pictures appear alongside the writing and complement the text; the diversity of the faces also shows the typical range of bravado and vulnerability that teen boys display. Teens will recognize their own experiences in these works. Note that, unlike the girls' collection, this volume contains a much more prolific use of profanity, and crude, misogynistic and homophobic language. While the voices and language are certainly authentic, those teachers who choose to use this work are encouraged to have a conversation with students about the language before and after using it. Words matter and exploring the origins and impact of their speech and choice of words is an important aspect of helping students grow. Students can use this and the selection of girls' poems to compare viewpoints across gender lines, to give teens a means of learning more about each other.

THEMES: Biases and Stereotypes, Bullying Issues, Communication, Feelings, Gender Issues, Justice/Injustice, Peer Relationships, Respecting Differences, Social Systems, Team-Building, Violence

“We read to know we are not alone.”
C.S. Lewis (Novelist, Poet)

The following chart is designed to help teachers quickly identify books that address or contain additional special issue beyond **Themes** listed with each annotation in the **Student Literature** sections above. Most of the books in this bibliography (and the 2009 [Companion Bibliography](#)) have multiple, often overlapping, themes. Those listed below are no exception; many titles appear in multiple categories. In some books, the issue is presented as a broad underlying theme; for others, the issue may be presented through a particular character or piece (as in the case of poems and short stories). Issues are listed alphabetically and include bulleted examples of sub-themes. Once you have identified a title, please refer to the primary listing at each grade-level section of the *Student Literature* to review the annotation, the background information and guidance about how to approach the various issues. As always, make sure to read the book before sharing it with students to make sure it is appropriate for use in your classroom or teaching setting!

| ISSUE | TITLE | GRADE LEVEL |
|---|--|--------------|
| Addiction/Mental Illness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alcoholism • Conduct Disorder • “Cutting”/Self Mutilation • Depression • Drug Abuse • Mental Illness • PTSD | Because of Winn Dixie | 3-5 (Vol 1) |
| | Drita My Home Girl | 3-5 |
| | Our Gracie Aunt | 3-5 |
| | A Long Walk to Water | 6-8 |
| | Every Living Thing | 6-8 |
| | Fat Boy Chronicles | 6-8 |
| | Mockingbird | 6-8 |
| | OK for Now | 6-8 |
| | Tangerine | 6-8 (Vol 1) |
| | Touching Spirit Bear | 6-8 |
| | Autobiography of Malcom X | 9-12 |
| | A Long Way Gone | 9-12 |
| | Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian | 9-12 |
| | Almost Home | 9-12 |
| | Beneath A Meth Moon | 9-12 |
| | Bronx Masquerade | 9-12 |
| | Call Me Ahab | 9-12 |
| | Causcasia | 9-12 |
| | Defending Jacob | 9-12 |
| | Home | 9-12 |
| | Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse | 9-12 |
| | Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven | 9-12 |
| | Maus | 9-12 |
| | One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest | 9-12 (Vol 1) |
| | Paint Me Like I Am | 9-12 |
| | Push | 9-12 |
| | She’s Come Undone | 9-12 |
| | Stupid Fast | 9-12 |
| | Tears of a Tiger | 9-12 |
| | Thirteen Reasons Why | 9-12 |
| | You Hear Me | 9-12 |

Special Issues Charts

| ISSUE | TITLE | GRADE LEVEL |
|----------------------------|---|--------------|
| Bias-Based Bullying | Oliver Button Is a Sissy | K-2 (Vol 1) |
| | Williams Doll | K-2 (Vol 1) |
| | Name Jar | K-2 (Vol 1) |
| | All for the Better | 3-5 (Vol 1) |
| | Angel Child, Dragon Child | 3-5 (Vol 1) |
| | Crow Boy | 3-5 (Vol 1) |
| | Drita, My Homegirl | 3-5 |
| | Hundred Dresses | 3-5 (Vol 1) |
| | In Our Mother's House | 3-5 |
| | Molly's Pilgrim | 3-5 (Vol 1) |
| | Saltpie | 3-5 |
| | Sneetches | 3-5 (Vol 1) |
| | Any Small Kindness | 6-8 |
| | Fat Boy Chronicles | 6-8 |
| | Kizzy Ann Stamps | 6-8 |
| | Looking for X | 6-8 |
| | Loud Silence of Francine Green | 6-8 |
| | Mockingbird | 6-8 |
| | Out of My Mind | 6-8 |
| | Paperboy | 6-8 |
| | Shooting Kabul | 6-8 |
| | Skin I'm In | 6-8 (Vol 1) |
| | Touch Blue | 6-8 |
| | Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963 | 6-8 |
| | Wonder | 6-8 |
| | Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian | 9-12 |
| | Almost Home | 9-12 |
| | Bronx Masquerade | 9-12 |
| | Girl In Reverse | 9-12 |
| | Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet | 9-12 |
| | Mexican White Boy | 9-12 |
| | Middlesex | 9-12 (Vol 1) |
| | Mississippi Trial:1955 | 9-12 |
| | Push | 9-12 |
| | Red Hot Salsa | 9-12 |
| | She's Come Undone | 9-12 |
| | Snow Falling on Cedars | 9-12 |
| | To Kill A Mockingbird | 9-12 (Vol 1) |

Special Issues Charts

| ISSUE | TITLE | GRADE LEVEL |
|---------------------|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Child Abuse/Neglect | Because of Winn Dixie | 3-5 (Vol 1) |
| | Our Gracie Aunt | 3-5 |
| | Fat Boy Chronicles | 6-8 |
| | OK for Now | 6-8 |
| | Queen of Water | 6-8 |
| | Touching Spirit Bear | 6-8 |
| | Almost Home | 9-12 |
| | Autobiography of Malcom X | 9-12 |
| | Bronx Masquerade | 9-12 |
| | Forged By Fire | 9-12 |
| | I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings | 9-12 (Vol 1) |
| | Paint Me Like I Am | 9-12 |
| | Push | 9-12 |
| | She's Come Undone | 9-12 |
| | Stupid Fast | 9-12 |

Special Issues Charts

| ISSUE | TITLE | GRADE LEVEL |
|---|---|--------------|
| Disabilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autism/ASD • Alzheimer's/Aging • Birth Defects • Blindness/Visual Impairment • Movement Disorders/Physical Disabilities • Diabetes • Health/Disease • Hearing Loss/Deafness • HIV/AIDS • Learning Disabilities • Mental Retardation • Morbid Obesity • Speech Disorders • Traumatic Brain Injury | Jacob's Eye Patch | K-2 |
| | Two Bobbies | K-2 |
| | Teacakes for Tosh | K-2 |
| | Autism Acceptance Book | 3-5 |
| | Crow Boy | 3-5 (Vol 1) |
| | Saltpie | 3-5 |
| | Thank You, Mr. Falker | 3-5 (Vol 1) |
| | Wilma Unlimited | 3-5 |
| | Every Living Thing | 6-8 |
| | Feathers | 6-8 (Vol 1) |
| | Fat Boy Chronicles | 6-8 |
| | Harrison Bergeron | 6-8 (Vol 1) |
| | Looking for X | 6-8 |
| | Miracles Boys | 6-8 |
| | Mockingbird | 6-8 |
| | OK for Now | 6-8 |
| | Our Stories, Our Songs | 6-8 |
| | Paperboy | 6-8 |
| | Rules | 6-8 (Vol 1) |
| | Tangerine | 6-8 (Vol 1) |
| | Touching Spirit Bear | 6-8 |
| | A Lesson Before Dying | 9-12 (Vol 1) |
| | Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian | 9-12 |
| | Bronx Masquerade | 9-12 |
| | Call Me Ahab | 9-12 |
| | Children of a Lesser God | 9-12 |
| | Curious Tale of the Dog in the Nighttime | 9-12 (Vol 1) |
| | Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks | 9-12 |
| | Kings Speech | 9-12 |
| | Moloka'i | 9-12 |
| | Of Mice and Men | 9-12(Vol 1) |
| | One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest | 9-12 (Vol 1) |
| | One of Us | 9-12 |
| | Push | 9-12 |
| | Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down | 9-12 |
| | To Kill A Mockingbird | 9-12 (Vol 1) |

Special Issues Charts

| ISSUE | TITLE | GRADE LEVEL |
|--|---------------------------------|-------------|
| Diverse & Non-Traditional Families <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption • Extended/"Kith & Kin" • Foster Care • LGBT • Multi-Generational • Multi-Racial • Single Parents | And Tango Makes Three | K-2 |
| | Black, White, Just Right | K-2 |
| | Dear Juno | K-2 |
| | Families Change | K-2 |
| | Jin Woo | K-2 |
| | Marisol MacDonald Doesn't Match | K-2 |
| | Shades of People | K-2 |
| | Teacakes for Tosh | K-2 |
| | Two Bobbies | K-2 |
| | Visiting Day | K-2 |
| | And Tango Makes Three | 3-5 |
| | Families Change | 3-5 |
| | I Am Jack | 3-5 |
| | In Our Mother's House | 3-5 |
| | Our Gracie Aunt | 3-5 |
| | Saltpie | 3-5 |
| | Thanksgiving Visitor | 3-5 (Vol 1) |
| | This Is the Rope | 3-5 |
| | Two Bobbies | 3-5 |
| | Visiting Day | 3-5 |
| | A Long Walk to Water | 6-8 |
| | Before We Were Free | 6-8 |
| | Boy: Tales of Childhood | 6-8 (Vol 1) |
| | Breadwinner | 6-8 |
| | Ellen Foster | 6-8 (Vol 1) |
| | Esperanza Rising | 6-8 |
| | Fat Boy Chronicles | 6-8 |
| | Hunger Games | 6-8 |
| | Looking for X | 6-8 |
| | Miracle's Boys | 6-8 |
| | Mockingbird | 6-8 |
| | Our Stories, Our Songs | 6-8 |
| | Shooting Kabul | 6-8 |
| | Shutting Out The Sky | 6-8 |
| | Touch Blue | 6-8 |
| | What Will Happen To Me | 6-8 |

Special Issues Charts

| ISSUE | TITLE | GRADE LEVEL |
|---|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Diverse & Non-Traditional Families (cont.) | A Long Way Gone | 9-12 |
| | Almost Home | 9-12 |
| | Autobiography of Malcom X | 9-12 |
| | Book Thief | 9-12 |
| | Caucasia | 9-12 |
| | Color of Water | 9-12 |
| | Domestic Work | 9-12 |
| | Girl in Reverse | 9-12 |
| | Help, The | 9-12 |
| | I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings | 9-12 (Vol 1) |
| | Les Misérables | 9-12 |

| ISSUE | TITLE | GRADE LEVEL |
|--|--|-------------|
| Gender Issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Body Image • “Boy Culture” • Gender Bias • Gender Identity • Gender-Role Stereotypes • Homophobia • LGBTQ/Sexual Orientation • Sexism • Teen Pregnancy/ Parenting • Women’s Rights | A Letter to Amy | K-2 |
| | And Tango Makes Three | K-2 |
| | Horace and Morris and Mostly Delores | K-2 |
| | Oliver Button Is a Sissy | K-2 (Vol 1) |
| | Sojourner Truth’s Step Stomp Stride | K-2 |
| | Williams Doll | K-2 (Vol 1) |
| | And Tango Makes Three | 3-5 |
| | In Our Mother’s House | 3-5 |
| | This Child, Every Child | 3-5 |
| | Wilma Unlimited | 3-5 |
| | A Long Walk to Water | 6-8 |
| | Any Small Goodness | 6-8 |
| | Bamboo People | 6-8 |
| | Before We Were Free | 6-8 |
| | Breadwinner | 6-8 |
| | Esperanza Rising | 6-8 |
| | Fat Boy Chronicles | 6-8 |
| | Hunger Games | 6-8 |
| | If You lived When Women Won Their Rights | 6-8 |
| | Miracle’s Boys | 6-8 |
| | My Childhood Under Fire | 6-8 |
| | OK for Now | 6-8 |
| | Queen of Water | 6-8 |
| | Shutting Out the Sky | 6-8 |
| | This Child, Every Child | 6-8 |
| | Touch Blue | 6-8 |
| | When My Name Was Keoko | 6-8 |

Special Issues Charts

| ISSUE | TITLE | GRADE LEVEL |
|----------------------------------|--|--------------|
| Gender Issues (cont.) | A Long Way Gone | 9-12 |
| | Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian | 9-12 |
| | Almost Home | 9-12 |
| | Annie John | 9-12 (Vol 1) |
| | Autobiography of Malcom X | 9-12 |
| | Beneath A Meth Moon | 9-12 |
| | Black & White | 9-12 |
| | Bronx Masquerade | 9-12 |
| | Domestic Work | 9-12 |
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| | Red Badge of Courage | 6-8 (Vol 1) |
| | Shooting Kabul | 6-8 |
| | This Child, Every Child | 6-8 |
| | Touching Spirit Bear | 6-8 |
| | Tangerine | 6-8 (Vol 1) |
| | Tree Girl | 6-8 |
| | Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963 | 6-8 |
| | When My Name Was Keoko | 6-8 |
| | A Strange and Bitter Fruit | 9-12 |
| | Almost Home | 9-12 |
| | Autobiography of Malcom X | 9-12 |
| | Beloved | 9-12 |
| | Between Shades of Grey | 9-12 |
| | Black & White | 9-12 |
| | Book Thief | 9-12 |
| | Bringing the Shovel Down | 9-12 |
| | Bronx Masquerade | 9-12 |
| | Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee | 9-12 (Vol 1) |
| | Coming of Age in Mississippi | 9-12 (Vol 1) |
| | Diary of Anne Frank | 9-12 (Vol 1) |
| | Forged By Fire | 9-12 |

| ISSUE | TITLE | GRADE LEVEL |
|---------------------------------|--|--------------|
| Violence/War (Cont.) | Gunstories | 9-12 |
| | Half the Sky | 9-12 |
| | Home | 9-12 |
| | Homeboyz | 9-12 |
| | I Am Malala | 9-12 (5-11) |
| | Incidents in the Life of A Slave Girl | 9-12 |
| | Kite Runner | 9-12 (Vol 1) |
| | Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse | 9-12 |
| | Les Misérables | 9-12 |
| | Lord of the Flies | 9-12 (Vol 1) |
| | Maus | 9-12 |
| | Mississippi Trial—1955 | 9-12 |
| | Monster | 9-12 |
| | Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass | 9-12 |
| | One Thousand Splendid Suns | 9-12 |
| | Paint Me Like I Am | 9-12 |
| | Persepolis | 9-12 |
| | Push | 9-12 |
| | Rash | 9-12 |
| | Rose That Grew From Concrete | 9-12 |
| | Ruined | 9-12 |
| | Shawshank Redemption | 9-12 |
| | Slave | 9-12 |
| | Snitch | 9-12 |
| | Things They Carried | 9-12 |
| | Tree Girl | 9-12 |
| | Twelve Years A Slave | 9-12 |

"When I say..."read to a child,"
I don't want it to sound like medicine. I want it to sound like chocolate."
Mem Fox (Author, Literary Specialist)

Curriculum Support Materials (Including Audio Visuals)

Caring Hearts and Critical Minds: Literature, Inquiry and Social Responsibility

Stephen Wolk (*Author*)

Stenhouse Publishers: 2012

Teacher-author Wolk describes how to use selected student literature to teach students to become better readers, critical thinkers, and to promote themes like social responsibility and justice, ethics, caring, and moral consciousness. The book contains concrete methods, teaching tips, classroom aids, and several lengthy lists of books. While there are no annotations, the text is liberally sprinkled with ideas about how to use many of the listed literature selections. While directed towards Grades 6-8, many of the basic teaching concepts (such as inquiry learning) and techniques are applicable in Grades 4-5, and the booklists provide challenging titles that would be appropriate for use in Grades 9-12.

Teacher Guide: Grades 6-8

Creating Caring Classrooms: How to Encourage Students to Communicate, Create, and Be Compassionate of Others

Kathy Gould Lundy and Larry Swartz (*Authors*)

Pembroke Publishers: 2011

This book is intended to help teachers build respectful relationships among students, teachers, and the school community, and supplies both a philosophical framework as well as active, engaging, and open-ended lesson activities for students. Activities encourage student exploration different perspectives. Chapters include: Building Community, Building Communication, Building Collaboration, and Building Compassion; an additional chapter addresses bullying and the twelve lessons included focus on the relational elements involved. This last section references work and input from researcher Debra Pepler, but many of the activities will look familiar to Olweus Trainers.

Teacher Guide: Grades K-8

Empowering Children of Incarcerated Parents

Stacey Burgess, Tonia Caselman, and Jennifer Carsey (*Authors*)

YouthLight, Inc.: 2009

This book for counselors, social workers, psychologists and teachers is meant for use with children ages 7-12 who have a parent who is incarcerated and is designed so that work can be done individually or in small groups. Each chapter includes a brief literature review, suggestions for additional supports, discussion questions, fictional letters between a boy and his incarcerated father, activities, and reproducible worksheets. Topics include: understanding what happened, building a support system, dealing with shame, allowing for grief, acknowledging trauma, developing a positive identity, learning to ensure success, handling angry feelings, building positive relationships, and planning for the future

Counseling/Teacher Resource: Grades 2-7

Fat Boy Chronicles, The

Jason Winn (*Director*)

Pulse4Films: 2012

Use of this 78-minute DVD inspired by a true story is best paired with book by the same name (reviewed in the Grade 6-8 section). The film also tells the inspiring story of overweight outsider Jimmy Winterpock, who finds a way to overcome cruel bullying by his high school classmates, transforming his life in the process.

Curriculum Resource (AV): *Grades 6-10*

Freedom Writers Diary Teacher's Guide

Erin Gruell and The Freedom Writers (*Authors*)

Broadway Books: 2007

This standards-based teachers' guide includes innovative teaching techniques that take students through a three-stage process intended to maximize their understanding of The Freedom Writers Diary, while supporting the central message of tolerance. Teacher-author Gruell (along with a team of teacher experts) shares unconventional but highly effective techniques to teaching writing to high school students deemed "unteachable" in an inner city school dominated by violence, gangs, and failing students. The process will engage, empower, and motivate students, the strategies for motivating and connecting with students through their real life experiences will enlighten and inspire new and veteran teachers alike. The text is presented in an easy-to-use format with black-and-white illustrations. There are a various other books by this author (including Freedom Writers Diary: How a Teacher and 150 Teens Used Writing to Change Themselves and the World Around Them)

Teacher Guide: *Grades 7-12*

Handful of Quiet

Thich Nhat Hanh (*Author*)

Plum Blossom Books, Spi Edition: 2012

This 64-page spiral bound book introduces the calming practice of "pebble meditation." Using four ordinary pebbles (each representing an aspect of nature—such as water, earth, air, or fire—or a specific quality, such as love), this easy-to-use book offers complete instructions for teaching this technique. It can be used by teachers, counselors and parents to create calm and quiet during transitions, promote a sense of peacefulness and wellbeing, and provide a lifelong coping tool to reduce stress, improve focus, and cope with difficulties and strong emotions. While too abstract for K-4 students, where guided imagery and breathing exercises would be more effective, preteens through adults will find it useful.

Curriculum Resource: *Grades 5-up; Teacher/Counseling Reference: Grades 5-up*

Have You Filled a Bucket Today? A Guide to Daily Happiness for Kids

Carol McCloud (*Author*), David Messing (*Illustrator*)

Ferne Press: 2006

This author has written several picture books centered on the same concept (including [How Full Is Your Bucket? For Kids](#)). All focus on teaching students the value of expressing prosocial behaviors like kindness, cooperation, sharing, standing up for one another, showing appreciation, and caring (“bucket filling”) as opposed to negative behaviors like put-downs, teasing, meanness or other unkind act that reduce the feelings or self-esteem of others (“bucket dipping”). Bucket filling and dipping are effective metaphors that can be used at all ages to help promote and reinforce understanding about the effects actions and words have on the wellbeing of others and ourselves. This book (also in a child’s picture-book format) appears here as a curriculum resource because it is a bit too didactic for young children, but explains the process and benefits (so teachers can determine the most developmentally appropriate way to present the concepts to students at various grade levels. It can also be used as a strategy for developing positive reinforcement systems to promote and reinforce prosocial behavior or as a way helping adults model more positive behavior. Additional products and resource materials are available at the [website](#)^{lv}.

Teacher Guide/Curriculum Resource: Grades K-12

Hip Hop Poetry and the Classics

Alan Lawrence Sitomer and Michael Cirelli (*Authors*)

Milk Mug Publications: 2004

This interactive workbook compares the literary and artistic merits are of Hip Hop and classic poetry: e.g., Robert Frost to Public Enemy, Shakespeare to Eminem, and Shelley to the Notorious B.I.G. Students and teachers will enjoy the format which examines the art of writing, gives an in-depth analysis of poetic literary devices (such as symbolism, alliteration, allusion, imagery, metaphor, onomatopoeia, etc.), and includes lesson-plans and worksheets for creative writing activities. The strength of this work is that it is a useful tool that teachers can use to connect student’s real-life experiences with academic content and standards-based language arts instruction. Additional resources, learning objectives, and the language arts standards covered for each lesson are included.(Note: some of the contemporary lyrics contain language that might be deemed inappropriate in your school.)

Curriculum Resource: Grades 8-12

Is Nothing Something?: Kids' Questions and Zen Answers About Life, Death, Family, Friendship, and Everything in Between

Thich Nhat Hanh(*Author*), Jessica McClure (*Illustrator*)

Plum Blossom Press: 2014

Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh answers heartfelt, difficult, and sometimes funny questions from children of all ages. The book begins with basic questions (“What is important in life?” and “Why is my brother mean to me?”) and progresses to more difficult personal (“How do I know if I really love somebody?” or “How long am I going to live?”) and social issues (“Why is it wrong to kill?” or “Why do people have wars?”), and also spiritual and existential questions (“What does God look like?” or “How does it feel when you are dead?”). Each page presents a question with a short answer from Thich Nhat Hanh. The back of the book

^{lv} <http://www.bucketfillers101.com>

includes a children's biography of Thich Nhat Hanh, along with basic, kid-friendly instructions for mindful breathing and mindful walking. The answers, based on Buddhist principles and beliefs, do not promote a particular religious or spiritual agenda and most answers present simple principles of how to be kind, loving, and full of compassion. While the answers and drawings (many of animals in yoga poses) are geared towards younger children, with text appropriate for beginning readers, the ideas, concepts and mindfulness techniques could be used with students of any age.

Curriculum Resource: *Grades K-3; Teacher Resource:* *Grades 3 and up*

It's (Still) Elementary: Talking About Gay Issues in School

Debra Chasnoff (Writer/Director)

GroundSpark: 2008

This 47-minute film for students and accompanying Teacher Guide have been updated and reformatted since its original 1996 release. This film was the first to address anti-gay prejudice with children. The film's goal is to create welcoming school environments for all students. Based on the premise that homophobia hurts all students and creates a pervasive climate of disrespect in schools, this supplies practical lessons on how to talk with children about gay people, and demonstrates the openness and eagerness with which children approach the facts and issues about stereotypes. Shot in six public and private elementary and middle schools, the film models effective ways to teach about family diversity, name-calling, stereotypes, and community building. The DVD includes a 37-minute educator training, Spanish subtitles and closed captions. The teaching guide (geared to educators and community organizers) includes age-graded lessons linked to the film, professional development tools and activities, tips for addressing legal concerns, glossary and resource bibliography. Part of the Respect for All Project.

Curriculum Resource (AV)/Teacher Guide: *Grades K-8*

Let's Get Real

Debra Chasnoff (Director)

GroundSpark: 2004

This 37-minute film for students and accompanying Teacher Guide examine various issues that can lead to bullying and harassment: including racial and ethnic differences, religious issues, social class issues, appearance (particularly weight), learning difficulties, and perceive sexual orientation. The film focuses exclusively on student's voices as they express their feelings and tell their stories. It also lets us hear from students who engage in bullying others and their reflections about why they act the way they do and how it makes them feel (note: at least some of these scenes are concerning because the students' affect and their words don't always appear to be in synch—so they still appear exhilarated rather than introspective or remorseful about their behavior. Be sure to make a point to talk about this point with students; get their impressions and reactions to these scenes. Using this film as part of a long term schoolwide bullying prevention program will also help address this issue). Another section focuses on the reactions of students who had the courage to stand up for themselves or their classmates. The film includes Spanish and English subtitles. The accompanying 130-page Curriculum Guide features valuable lesson plans, discussion starters, classroom activities and handouts for teachers to use in conjunction with the film, along with resource materials. Though intended for Grades 6-8, is most appropriate for students in Grades 7-12; screen carefully for use with in Grade 6; with minor adaptations, it will also be useful Grades 10-12. Part of the Respect for All Project.

Curriculum Resource (AV)/Teacher Guide: *Grade 7-12*

Maybe Days: A Book for Children in Foster Care

Jennifer Wilgocki and Marcia Khan Wright (*Authors*), Alissa Imre Geis (*Illustrator*)

Magination Press: 2002

This bibliotherapy book for children in foster care, offers a straightforward look at the potential issues and common questions that children ask, and the feelings that they confront. As a primer for children going into foster care, the book explains in a child's terms the responsibilities of individuals they might encounter: social workers, lawyers and judges. This book thoroughly covers issues foster families and educators are likely to encounter, acknowledges that adjusting to life in a new family can be hard, and offers hope, comfort, and encouragement for children trying to cope with uncertainty.

Curriculum Resource: *Grades K-5; Counseling/Teacher/Parent Resource:* *Grades K-8*

Mindful Movements: Ten Exercises for Well-Being

Thich Nhat Hanh (*Author*), Wietske Vriezen (*Illustrator*)

Parallax Press (July 28, 2008)

Based on yoga and tai chi movements, these ten simple, effective exercises presented in an easy-to-follow spiral bound format are designed to reduce mental, physical, and emotional stress and help with both energizing/focus and relaxation. Each exercise can be performed by people of all ages and all body types, whether they're familiar with mindful practices or not and take only a few minutes of time. They are simple to use with students (including those with executive function and impulse control issues) and for staff as well. The DVD reinforces exercises presented in the book and is great for visual learners.

Curriculum Resource: *Grade K-12; Teacher Resource:* *Grade K-Adult*

My Daddy Is in Jail: Story, Discussion Guide, and Small Group Activities for Grades K-5

Janet M. Bender (*Author*)

YouthLight, Inc.: 2003

This topic-based resource for professionals and caregivers working with children who have an incarcerated parent focuses on providing information and support to both children and their families. In a school setting, it would be most likely used by a counselor (in individual or small group therapeutic settings), rather than by a teacher in a classroom setting. This short book includes information and materials for professionals, tip sheets for caregivers and family members, activities for eight small-group counseling sessions, and a discussion guide. It also includes a read-aloud story but formatting issues might make it difficult to use well with students: the story and child-drawn illustrations appear on the right-hand page while questions for adults to pose appear on the opposite page, making it difficult to maintain the feel and flow of a story in the usual way (where a child would "read" along); and the story ends with the main character entering a counseling group at school (which may or may not be the case). That said, the concrete questions will likely to lead to meaningful discussions with children in Grades K-5.

Counseling/Parent Resource: *Grade K-5*

Quandary

<http://www.quandarygame.org>

Quandary is a free online “Games for Change” award-winning game for students in Grades 3-up to play at home or in the classroom. Developed by collaborators from Harvard, MIT and Tufts Universities, the game promotes critical thinking, perspective-taking, problem-solving, global awareness and ethical decision-making. The game consists of engaging situations involved in building a new colony on the imaginary planet Braxos. Students must make decisions where there is no right or wrong answer, where consequences affect themselves and fellow colony inhabitants. Though set in a futuristic colony, the situations relate to real life quandaries. Designed for students to use independently, with friends, or adults, teachers choosing to use this game at the elementary grade might find it best to introduce it as a class project with adult guidance, due to the complexity of concepts and decision-making skills involved; with middle school students, as small-group project with adult oversight; in Grades 9-12, as an independent or small group project where they are encouraged to analyze, evaluate and report on their efforts. The game has been mapped to the Common Core State Standards in English Language for reading and listening (documentation available in the site’s teacher section), but is also aligned in some key areas of Mathematics standards related to critical thinking and analysis; classroom activities can also support Writing standards. There is a separate section for teachers with tips on using it in the classroom.

Curriculum Resource: Grades 3-12; **Teacher Reference:** Grades 3-12

Seven Habits of Happy Kids

Sean Covey (Author), Stacy Curtis (Illustrator)

Touchstone: 2014

Written by the son of Stephen Covey (of Seven Habits of Highly Effective People acclaim), this updated edition consists of seven loosely-linked short “fables,” each highlighting aspects of the signature “seven habits.” For children, this is put in the context of contributing to a collaborative community through three sets of behaviors: personal habits (making choices, having a plan, and work comes before play); playing well with others (everyone can win, listen before speaking, we do better when we work together); and balance is best. While intended to be a piece of student literature (in dense picture-book format with animal characters), it is listed here instead as a curriculum resource, because the young students to whom it is geared will need adult guidance in order to understand and practice these ideas. Teachers are encouraged to present each fable and concept in a separate class meeting with its own discussion (rather than reading the book as a whole), utilizing the “Habit Tree” as a concrete way of helping students visualize these subtle and complex concepts, and revisiting concepts (and the fables they align with) to reinforce concepts (i.e. it’s a process). These ideas can be used to promote prosocial behaviors and team-building within a classroom or as a whole-school initiative. Questions at the end of each section provide a mechanism for adults at home or school to open up conversations with children about each topic; these same pages also include ideas for troubleshooting problem behaviors and nurturing the particular character trait.

Curriculum Resource: Grades K-5; **Parent Reference:** Grades K-5

Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teens

Sean Covey (*Author*)

Touchstone: 2014

Adapted from the author's father's Seven Habits of Highly Effective People (Free Press 2004), this updated version for teens intends to teach teens the same seven strategies to help them create good habits and take responsibility to get/keep themselves organized (be proactive, plan ahead, and prioritize); improve their relationships with others (find mutual benefit, work toward mutual understanding, and use creative cooperation); and finding renewal/balance. It follows the principles of the 7 Habits and addresses the tough issues and life-changing decisions teens face in an entertaining style that includes cartoons, quotes, stories, and ideas from diverse teens around the globe. Topics addressed include: self-image, friendships, peer pressure, setting and achieving goals, getting along with parents, cyber bullying and social media, teen reads, and a bibliography. While this text is intended for teens to use independently, it is listed here as a teacher resource because some teens (particularly those unfamiliar with or resistant to the idea of "self-help" books, those who lack skills in self-reflection, and those with attention and other executive function difficulties) will benefit from having these concepts addressed through guided reading, discussion, and group problem-solving. In addition, its length (just under 300 pages) will be daunting for reluctant or challenged readers; reading aloud chapters, and "chunking" by chapter will help make it more accessible. This can be a particularly useful tool to help teens visualize a roadmap to help them navigate a path from where they are now, to where they might want to be in the future (i.e. to identify their passion/dream, set goals, and create a plan for achieving your goals and realize your dreams). This title is available in several formats.

Curriculum Resource: *Grades 7-12*; **Student Literature:** *Grades 9-12*

Straightlaced: How Gender's Got Us All Tied Up

Debra Chasnoff (*Director*)

GroundSpark: 2011

This 67-minute film for students and accompanying Curriculum Guide offer engaging perspectives of over fifty high school students from diverse backgrounds, communities, and a full spectrum gender identities (straight, homosexual, bisexual, and "questioning"). Students talk about issues such as media messages about body image, peer pressure to have sex, the complicated idea of what sexual identity is, and the toll that deeply held stereotypes and rigid gender norms have on all of us. Content includes topics like: choosing between "male" and "female" deodorant; deciding whether to go along with anti-gay locker-room taunts; having the courage to take ballet; avoiding the restroom to avoid bullying; and mourning the suicide of a classmate—making it clear that just about everything teens do requires thinking about gender and sexuality. Spanish subtitles and closed captioned are included along with film clips for interactive classroom activities and electronic copies of all handouts and materials. The 160-page Curriculum Guide is designed for use in school, community group and professional development settings and includes informative background materials (including a glossary), thoughtful tips on using the film, discussion tools and activities, and resource materials. Though this resource was originally developed for use in Grades 9-12, the first several chapters of the guide and corresponding portions of the film may also be used with students in Grades 6-8, providing the materials are carefully previewed and evaluated for appropriateness with your students. Latter chapters/sections (specifically geared to students in Grades 9-12) include frank discussion of adolescent sexuality, references to drug use, and suicide. Part of the Respect for All Project.

Curriculum Resource (AV)/Teacher Guide: *Grade 9-12 and Grades 6-8 (initial sections only)*

That's A Family!: A Film for Kids About Family Diversity

Deborah Chasnoff (*Director*)

Women's Educational Media (now GroundSpark): 2000/2002

This 35-minute film for students was the first of the highly acclaimed Respect for all Project children's films. Designed for use by elementary school teachers, the focus of the film is to promote a greater understanding about and respect for cultural differences and family diversity, and to depict a more accurate picture about what families look like than is often presented in classroom curricula. Children take viewers on a tour through their lives as they speak candidly about what it's like to grow up in a family with parents of different races or religions, divorced parents, a single parent, gay or lesbian parents, adoptive parents or grandparents as guardians. It is recommended that the film be used as part of a larger unit on families and family diversity and shown in short chapter segments with students in Grades K-2 and in its entirety with students in Grades 3-5. It may also be used as teaching tool with students in Grades 6-12, with the caveat that they are given the context that this was created with young students in mind; doing this may present older students with openings to reveal personal aspects about their own childhood and current experiences with diversity. The film includes Spanish and English subtitles and closed captions. The 58 page Discussion and Teaching Guide that accompanies the film includes lesson plans, suggestions for using the film and facilitating classroom discussion at different grade levels, and additional resources for teachers, families and children. It should be noted that the (coded and graded) bibliography of children's books still contains useful resources, many are somewhat dated (published prior to 1995). Schools and community groups may also sign up for training on how to use this diversity teaching tool with young children. Part of the Respect for All Project.

Curriculum Resource (AV)/Teacher Guide: *Grades K-5 (film only: Grades 6-12, see above for caveat)*

Welcoming Schools

<http://www.welcomingschools.org>

Welcoming Schools offers professional development training and consultation, lessons aligned with the Common Core State Standards, and many additional links and resources about embracing family diversity, avoiding gender stereotyping and affirming gender, and ending bullying and name-calling. A project of the Human Rights Campaign, the philosophy and program materials (designed for use in Grades K-5), are inclusive of the many types of diversity found in school communities (including LGBT families and people). This site offers many free materials for administrators, educators and parents/guardians to facilitate welcoming, safe, and respectful learning environments. Materials are geared for Grades K-5, but several "Teachable Moments" (e.g. "That's so gay!") are relevant and easily adapted for secondary students in Grades 6-12. A useful guide to age-appropriate definitions can also be found on the site:
<http://www.welcomingschools.org/pages/a-guide-to-age-appropriate-definitions-for-students>

Curriculum Resource: *Grades K-5* **Teacher Reference:** *Grades K-12;*

Adult Resources and References

Feature Films

In addition to the audio visual materials listed in the *Student Literature* and *Curriculum Resources* sections above, you may want to consider the following independent, documentary, and mainstream films (many based on available literature) for use with students in Grades 9-12 (some may be appropriate for Grades 6-8) to augment and spark further discussion about themes related to cultural competence. This is not a comprehensive list. Be sure to screen these carefully before presenting to students to evaluate language, violence, and sexual content that you might deem inappropriate for use with your students.

| Film | Date | Genre/Topic | Rating | Book? |
|------------------------------------|------|---|--------|-------|
| Angela's Ashes | 1999 | Drama (Substance Abuse/Poverty) | R | Y |
| Awakenings | 1990 | Drama (Medical Research) | PG-13 | Y |
| Beautiful Mind, A | 2001 | Biography (Schizophrenia) | PG-13 | Y |
| Beasts of the Southern Wild | 2012 | Docu-drama (Poverty/Bayou) | PG-13 | |
| Bend It Like Beckham | 2002 | Comedy (Sikh Customs/Gender Roles) | PG-13 | Y |
| Best Exotic Marigold Hotel | 2011 | Drama (Culture Conflict/Aging) | PG-13 | Y |
| Billy Elliott | 2000 | Comedy/Drama (Gender stereotypes/Dance) | PG-13 | Y |
| Buena Vista Social Club | 1999 | Documentary (Cuban Musicians) | G | |
| Butler, The | 2013 | Biography/Drama (Civil Rights) | PG-13 | Y |
| Castaway | 2000 | Adventure/Survival | PG-13 | |
| Children of a Lesser God | 1986 | Drama (Deafness) | R | Y |
| Color Purple | 1974 | Drama (Racism/Abuse/Women's Rights) | PG-13 | Y |
| Dallas Buyer's Club | 2013 | Drama/Biography (HIV/Aids) | R | Y |
| Flowers for Algernon | 2000 | Drama (Mental Retardation) | NR | Y |
| Fruitvale Station | 2013 | Drama/Biography (Racism/Murder) | R | |
| Girl Interrupted | 1000 | Drama/Biography (Mental Illness/Institutionalization) | R | Y |
| Girl Rising | 2013 | Documentary (Education/ Girls in Third World) | PG-13 | |
| Good Will Hunting | 1997 | Drama (Abuse/ Psychiatry/Brilliance) | R | |
| Half the Sky | 2012 | Documentary (Life of Women in Third World Countries) | NR | Y |
| Help, The | 2011 | Drama (Jim Crow South) | PG-13 | Y |
| Hotel Rwanda | 2004 | (Biography/Drama)Rwandan Genocide | PG-13 | |
| Hundred Foot Journey | 2014 | (Drama) Ethnic Stereotypes | PG | Y |
| I Never Promised You a Rose Garden | 1977 | Drama (Schizophrenia/Institutionalization) | R | Y |

Adult Resources and References

| Film | Date | Genre/Topic | Rating | Book? |
|---------------------------------|------|---|--------|-------|
| Les Miserable | 1998 | Drama/Crime/History (French Revolution) | PG-13 | Y |
| Like Water for Chocolate | 1992 | Drama/Romance (1900's Mexico/Customs) | R | Y |
| Little Prince | 1974 | Fantasy (Environmental Stewardship) | G | Y |
| Milk | 2008 | Biography/Drama/History (LGBT activist) | R | |
| My Left Foot | 1989 | Biography/Drama (Cerebral Palsy) | R | Y |
| One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest | 1975 | Drama (Treatment of Institutionalized Mental Patients) | R | Y |
| Philomena | 2013 | Biography/Drama (Teen Pregnancy/Adoption) | PG-13 | Y |
| Piano, The | 1993 | Drama/Music (Mutism/Women's Rights) | R | |
| Poisonwood Bible | 2012 | Drama (Congolese Missionary) | | Y |
| Rainman | 1988 | Drama (Autism Spectrum Savant) | R | |
| Scarlett Letter | 1979 | Drama (Ostracism) | NR | Y |
| Schindler's List | 1993 | Biography/Drama (Holocaust) | R | N |
| Slumdog Millionaire | 2008 | Drama/Romance (Mumbai street life) | R | Y |
| Supersize Me | 2004 | Documentary (Fast Food /Obesity) | PG | |
| Thin | 2006 | Documentary (Anorexia/Bulimia) | NR | |
| To Kill A Mockingbird | 1962 | Drama (Civil Rights, Class, Racism, Gender Issues, Disability Bias, Social Justice) | NR | Y |
| Twelve Years A Slave | 2013 | Biography/Drama (Slavery) | R | Y |
| Whale Rider | 2002 | Drama/Family (Maori Culture) | PG-13 | Y |

General Resource and Reference Materials

Ask Nana Jean About Making a Difference: Reflections on Life

Jean Moule, PhD (*Author*)

CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform: 2013

Written as brief “columns” on a wide range of topics, this multi-talented educator’s collection of musings and reflective vignettes (written as a “gift” for her grandchildren) covers a variety of subjects. Her stream-of-thought (and quirky) writing style makes these short passages interesting discussion-starters for staff meetings, faculty study groups or Staff Discussion Groups, or with parent groups. Topics include: family connections and love, race (including skin color, hair, Biracial identity), facing challenges personal growth and role models, travel, views on parenting and grand parenting from different cultures, and more.

Teacher Reference: Grades K-12; Staff Development: Grades K-12

“Best Practices for Serving Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Students in Schools”

Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition Policy Committee (*Author*)

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education: November, 2012

This report provides much needed information and guidance for schools about protecting the rights of gender non-conforming students. It offers guidance about promoting better understanding about this topic, facilitating the development of policies and procedures that protect students’ rights and address school responsibilities and liability. The report offers definitions, recommendations for administrative practices (including use of pronouns, recordkeeping and confidentiality), policy recommendations regarding restroom use, athletic participation, and bullying and harassment, and guidelines about implementation (including Title IX). It also offers youth resources and reference materials for adults (including some that recommend strategies for talking with students about gender). Available in a free in a [PDF format](#)^{lvi}. Though developed for use in Massachusetts’ schools (and many of the youth resources are Boston or MA-based), this document reflects US DOE Office for Civil Rights guidelines and Title IX legislation (making it applicable for schools across the US). Teachers may consider sharing some findings and national resources from this report with older teens (Grades 9-12); parent resources and student-literature for younger students (Grades 3-up) would be most appropriate in response to needs of individual students.

Teacher/Administrative Reference: Grades K-12; Curriculum Resource: Grades 3-12

Books, Media & the Internet: Children's Literature for Today's Classroom

Booth, DW, Peterson, S, and Jupiter C (*Editors*)

Portage & Main Press: 2009

This document from Canada is based on the work of colleagues from the 2008 conference “A Place for Children’s Literature in the New Literacies Classrooms.” It contains information for teachers, librarians, and others concerned with literacy about using technology along with literature to improve literacy outcomes using new technologies alongside traditional print media in their classrooms. This book

^{lvi} <http://www.masstpc.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/MTPC-2013-K-12-Best-Practices.pdf>

provides current information, classroom examples, and anecdotes as practical tools to help teachers use digital, media, and print texts to extend students' learning. The helpful "Teaching Tools" section at the end of the book explains how to use a variety of digital tools in the classroom.

Teacher/Administrative Reference: *Grades K-12*

Cultural Competence: A Primer for Educators

Jean Moule, PhD (Author)

Wadsworth/Cengage Learning: 2012

The revised edition of this research-based text is divided into three parts: basic concepts of cultural competence, psycho-social dimensions of educating culturally diverse students, and insights into demographics, family and cultural values of six major cultural groups. Unlike many texts, this one encourages genuine dialogue between White and students of color. It also includes self-awareness exercises that can be used as part of class meetings with older students or as part of staff development or parent workshops. Each chapter ends with practical tips and classroom activities for Grades K-12. A [companion website](#)^{lvii} includes a current bibliography of research and resource materials about the topic of cultural competence:.

Teacher Reference: *Grades K-12*; **Staff Development:** *Grades K-12*; **Curriculum Resource:** *Grades 9-12*

Creating A Caring Classroom: Hundreds of Ways to Make It Happen

Nancy Letts (Author)

Scholastic Professional Books: 1999

The author (a former elementary school teacher) presents teacher-tested strategies about how to build a caring classroom climate, promote positive relationships, model good listening skills, and establish a sense of community connection. While ideas can be adapted to classrooms at all levels, it is most appropriate for Grades K-5, and would be particularly helpful to new teachers and those having issues with class climate or difficulty with behavior management. While not a curriculum guide, each chapter includes ideas and strategies for use with students, teacher self-reflection activities, and daily action plans based on chapter content. Chapter topics include: the first month of school, promoting thoughtful dialogue (including using literature), managing the caring classroom and ending the year with pride.

Teacher Reference: *Grades K-6*; **Staff Development:** *Grades K-6*

Courageous Teaching: Creating a Caring Community in the Classroom

Jim Andersen (Author)

Corwin: 1995

This teacher-author addresses the idea that the most pressing educational problems are related to human relations, while traditional curriculum focuses on academic competence. He proposes a new model to promote student relationships—specifically how students relate to one another and their environment—and incorporates his ideas with the demand for character/values education in the classroom. Based on

lvii <http://www.cengage.com/education/moule>

extensive field testing and drawing from theories of contemporary psychologists (from Carl Roger's to Alexander Lowen's "Bioenergetics"), this text for teachers outlines a school model for establishing what he calls the "New R's:" reflection, responsibility, relationships and respect. Most recent research (in the past decade, since this book was published) in the field of education and bullying prevention reinforce the idea that improved social-emotional learning is linked to improved academic outcomes more positive school climate, and that improving peer relationships leads to a climate of respect where bullying is less likely to happen. This is an interesting text for teacher discussion groups to consider as they examine the culture and climate of their own schools and classrooms.

Teacher Reference: Grades K-12; **Staff Development:** Grades K-12

"Cultural Competence: The Nuts & Bolts of Diversity and Inclusion"

Mercedes Martin and Billy Vaughn (*Authors*)

In: Strategic Diversity Inclusion Management Magazine (Billy Vaughn, PhD, Ed) 2007: p31-38

This scholarly article provides a general view of cultural competence common among non-educational professionals, offers a working definition of cultural competence, characterizes its components, and describes its utility in diversity education.

Teacher Reference: Grades K-12

"Communicating Cross-Culturally: What Teachers Should Know"

Yvonne Pratt-Johnson (*Author*)

In: The Internet TESL Journal, Vol. XII, No. 2, February 2006

This article may be accessed [online](#)^{lviii} at. It presents a concise overview of the opportunities for communicating with non-native English speaking students and their families—going beyond bridging the language gap to truly understand them, their cultures and perspectives. Published by the national Canadian Teaching English as a Second Language Federation.

Teacher Reference: Grades K-12

"Culturally Competent Schools: Guidelines for Secondary School Principals"

Mary Beth Klotz (*Author*)

In: Journal of the National Association of School Psychologists, March 2006, p11-14

This article published by the National Association of School Psychologists (available online in [pdf-format](#)^{lix} looks at the need to expand training about cultural competence into the secondary schools (Grades 6-12). This article offers guidance for incorporating strategies to promote cultural competence as part of a school-wide approach to student success.

Teacher Reference: Grades 6-12

lviii <http://iteslj.org/Articles/Pratt-Johnson-CrossCultural.html>

lix <http://www.nasponline.org/resources/principals/Culturally%20Competent%20Schools%20NASSP.pdf>

“Dear Colleague” Letters

Office for Civil Rights of the US Department of Education(*Authors*)
2010-2014

The following six “Dear Colleague” Letters from the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) (part of the US Department of Education, or DOE) issued between 2010 and 2014 clarify students’ rights. All teachers and school administrators should familiarize themselves with these essential documents, as well as others issued in the future. These are available through electronic links (many in PDF format) and are as follows:

- <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-201401-title-vi.pdf> (January 2014 letter regarding nondiscriminatory administration of school discipline)
- <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-201306-title-ix.pdf> (June 2013 letter regarding rights of pregnant and parenting teen students; contains a link to online pamphlets)
- <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/memosdcltrs/bullyingdcl-8-20-13.pdf> (August 2013 letter clarifying rights of students with disabilities)
- <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-201104.pdf> (April 2011 letter regarding sexual harassment and sexual violence at school)
- <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/secletter/101215.html> (December 2011 letter regarding bullying in school)
- <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-201010.html> (October 2010 letter distinguishing harassment and bullying)

Teacher Reference: Grades K-12

Empty the Cup Before You Fill It Up: Relationship-Building Activities to Promote Effective Learning Environments

Ernest Mendes, PhD (*Author*)
Mendes Training and Consulting: 2003

This book contains many interesting ideas about how to connect and build relationships with non-traditional learners—particularly students who present themselves as oppositional or disengaged. The activities are intended to help create mental space (“emptying the cup”) to facilitate learning (“filling the cup”) by focusing on connection and relationship-building, creating a sense of community and teamwork, coaching effective communication, and energizers. The author, whose ideas are based in brain research, emotional learning theory, and classroom experience. explains how and why “cups” need to be emptied and gives teachers a vehicle to share and release pent-up emotions that get in the way of learning; it also gives them a set of strategies that they can learn to use on their own (helping them to cope with and become more resilient to stress. One of the perils of self-publishing is that the format is a bit scattered (and would have benefitted from editing and better layout design), but reader will find the content useful: 100 practical ideas, exercises, and action steps, including twenty-four numbered activities. Strategies can be applied in the classroom, staff meetings and training with adult learners.

Teacher Reference: Grades K-12; Staff Development: K-12; Curriculum Resource: Grades 8-12

How to Choose Movies to Watch and Improve Your Cross-Cultural Skills

Cindy King (Author)
Cindyking.biz: 2014

This interesting [article](#)^{lx} is posted on an international business blog page along with additional resource materials that teachers may find useful as reference, for staff development, or even as a curriculum resource to use with students. Interestingly, the business community often keeps up with issues that challenge our cultural competence or result in culture conflicts, so around cultural conflict

Teacher Reference: Grades K-12 ; **Staff Development:** Grades K-12; **Curriculum Resource:** Grades 8-12

Just Write: Here's How!

Walter Dean Myers(Author)
HarperFestival: 2012

Pronouncing that books saved his life, popular YA author Myers shares examples from his writing, tips and advice on writing process based on his own experiences (including his “six-box” and “four-box” outlines for writing fiction and nonfiction. Teachers can use some of his ideas and conviction that anyone can be a writer to inspire students’ writing, particularly at the secondary level.

Teacher Reference: Grades 8-12

Learning by Doing: A Handbook for Professional Learning Communities at Work

Richard and Rebecca DuFour, Robert Eaker and Thomas Many(Authors)
Solution Tree Press:2010

Professional learning communities (PLCs) can be effective to improve teacher communication, performance and effectiveness, and positively affect school climate. This second edition updates and expands on the earlier 2006 volume, taking research about PLCs and putting it into practice with concrete strategies, tips, and reproducible materials(in addition to providing a theoretical framework for PLC practices). The authors, all veteran educators, offer concrete, easy-to-follow steps, making this a good tool for principals interested in introducing or improving PLC practices in their schools. Contents include: an description of PLCs and their purpose, case studies and tips for implementation, responding when students don't learn, building a collaborative culture, assessing and “tweaking” efforts, dealing with consensus and conflict, the challenges of creating change, and references and resources. [Free reproducibles and study guide](#)^{lxi} are available online.

Teacher Reference: Grades K-12; **Staff Development:** Grades K-12

lx <http://cindyking.biz/how-to-choose-movies-to-watch-and-improve-your-cross-cultural-skills>

lxi <http://www.solution-tree.com/free-resources/plcatwork/lbd2>

Learning by Heart

Roland Barth (*Author*)

Jossey-Bass: 2004

Drawing from a career committed to building schools rich in community, learning, and leadership, he the author presents practical ideas for creating a welcoming school environment, where teachers are free to teach and students, to learn. He is critical of the familiar “program du jour” approach to school reform as disruptive and posits that the fundamentals of changing schools lies in improving school climate and culture. While many teachers and administrators may find his enthusiasm and idealism inspiring, others may find it frustrating (particularly those in districts where grass roots change and building-based initiatives tend to be discouraged). In either case, this book is an interesting read and is bound to provoke lively discussion (and hopefully action) when used as part of staff development and training, faculty study groups, or Staff Discussion Groups.

Teacher Reference: *Grades K-12; Staff Development:* *Grades K-12*

Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong

James W. Loewen (*Author*)

Touchstone: 2007

This updated and revised edition revisits the question about how much we know about our history is true; the roles that gender, race, class, power and privilege play in determining what aspects of our history is presented and how it is framed; and offers the author’s views about how (and why) certain myths continue to be perpetrated. This latest edition also includes a new chapter on 9/11 and the Iraq War. The author bases his opinions on his examination of eighteen leading high school American history texts, he has concluded that all are flawed (in numerous concrete ways) but also fail to capture the richness and ambiguity that make the study of history meaningful, relevant and “real” to students. Though this book does not offer a “corrective history” beyond pointing out problems, and the author has been criticized for his sometimes heavy-handed message and his own occasional factual errors, the material is thought-provoking—particularly in the context of promoting multicultural understanding (even within our own country), promoting cultural competence, and nurturing global citizens. This would provoke interesting discussion among faculty and staff, and aspects of it may also be used or adapted for students at the secondary level who are able to compare, analyze and critique different perspectives.

Teacher Reference: *Grades K-12; Curriculum Resource:* *Grades 7-12*

Lost at School: Why Our Kids with Behavioral Challenges are Falling Through the Cracks and How We Can Help Them

Ross Greene (*Author*)

Scribner: 2008

The author of [The Explosive Child](#) (Harper: 2010, Revised Ed.), a distinguished clinician and pioneer in working with behaviorally challenging students, offers his evidence-based approach for understanding and helping these students. He critiques commonly used disciplinary strategies (e.g. “zero tolerance,” being sent to the principal’s office, detentions, suspensions, and expulsions) as being largely ineffective as either deterrents or consequences for any student, but particularly for those who have behavioral difficulties (e.g. who don’t follow rules, have difficulty getting along with others, are disruptive, don’t respect authority, exhibit difficulties with executive function, etc.). Relying on neuroscience research, he proposes

an alternative framework for understanding “difficult students” called Collaborative Problem Solving. This approach is based on replacing ineffective consequences with teaching students social skills that will allow them to behave in more acceptable, socially adaptive ways; teaching them in developmentally appropriate and individually adapted increments. Techniques can be applied by classroom teachers in general, but will likely be most effective with collaboration with counseling and/or special education/resource staff to reinforce skills in individual or small-group therapeutic settings. Techniques include: tools to identify the triggers and lagging skills underlying challenging behavior, guidance and examples of ways to improve interactions, dialogues, Q & A's, one child's case study, and practical guidance for successful planning and collaboration (that includes parents and students).

Teacher/Counseling Reference: Grades K-12

Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom

Lisa Delpit (*Author*)

The New Press: 2006

This award-winning text is an essential read for teachers, administrators, and parents who want to create welcoming school climates and improve communication between school and home. This anniversary paperback edition features a new introduction by the author, and essays by Herbert Kohl and Charles Payne. The author presents ideas about how teachers can be better “cultural transmitters” in the classroom—specifically addressing attitudes and practices that reflect prejudice, stereotypes, and cultural assumptions, which lead to ineffective education. She suggests that many academic problems attributed to children of color stem from miscommunication, as primarily White teachers and “other people's children” struggle with the imbalance of power and the dynamics that characterize our contemporary educational system. This book is applicable for any teacher, including those in racially or culturally homogeneous schools, because schools reflect the attitudes of the communities in which they exist—and one goal of education is to help students become global citizens able to function and thrive in a multicultural environment. This would be a great addition to Staff Discussion or Study Groups.

Teacher Reference: Grades K-12

Pact's Multicultural Adoption Book Source

Pact: 2013

Compiled by Pact (a non-profit adoption alliance that provides adoption-related services and resources for children of color, their birth parents and adoptive parents), this extensive list of books, videos, and references about multicultural adoption is available as a [free PDF download](http://www.pactadopt.org/assets/pdfs/Pact-2013-BookSource.pdf)^{lxii} While conveniently organized by topic, resource type, and target audience (e.g. Toddlers, Preschool, Grades K-2, 3-5, Tweens-Middle School, Teens-High School, and various adult audiences) and accompanied by a one or two sentence synopsis plus a Pact critique/comment, be aware that *no* specific selection criteria and *no* publication dates are given for any listing. Some were considered too “dated” for inclusion in this bibliography—so carefully screen them before offering them to students or adults! Because there is such a variety geared to particular audiences (e.g. Asian adoptions, interracial adoption, transnational adoptions, same-sex adoption, etc.), counselors and School Librarians may be able to assist in selecting or identifying resources that best “match” your needs.

Counseling/Teacher Reference: Toddler-Adult Curriculum Resource: K-12

lxii www.pactadopt.org/assets/pdfs/Pact-2013-BookSource.pdf

Pop Cuturocity Movie Guide, The: Movies to Live and Learn By

Kate Berardo (*Author*)

Culturocity.com: 2004

This movie guide (available as a free PDF download) is a compilation of short articles, ideas and tip sheets that explain how to turn regular movie watching into a cultural learning opportunity. While the focus is primarily on independent and foreign films, the guidelines can be applied to Hollywood films as well (and in the decade since this document was released, more mainstream films about other cultures are not just more readily available, but are also more likely to portray those cultures more accurately and with fewer stereotypes). The guide does list films by name—though keep in mind that they are rather dated. See above list of more recent films that might be used with students to promote discussions about cross-cultural experiences and to augment literature and other classroom content. The “Diving Board Discussion List” provides good questions to kick off discussions about films with students and focuses on developing cultural awareness. Augment these ideas by visiting websites that highlight [independent films](#)^{lxiii} or [teacher websites](#)^{lxiv}.

Teacher Reference: Grades K-12; Staff Development: K-12; Curriculum Support Resource: Grades 8-12

Practicing Multiculturalism: Affirming Diversity in Counseling and Psychology

Timothy B. Smith (*Author/Editor*)

Allyn and Bacon: 2004

This edited textbook outlines effective multicultural practice and the principles of multiculturalism. It includes discussion of emotional reactions in multicultural scenarios, values and assumptions, and power, privilege, and contextual factors that influence best practices in the field of multicultural counseling, including chapters on the working with specific populations. Topics include the following: spiritual and religious diversity (including Islam), activism and organizational multicultural competence, classism, an overview of the multicultural movement in mental health, children's issues in a family context, international students and immigrants, and an ecological/contextual approach to assessment and treatment. Though written for counselors, teachers may find the chapter “Intercultural Communication Contexts as Mindful Human Achievements” (by Billy Vaughn of Diversity Training University Institute) to be helpful as it stresses the importance of mindfulness (the practice of being fully present as an active and available listener), considered a determining factor for successful intercultural communication.

Counseling/Teacher Reference: Grades K-12; Staff Development: K-12

“Promoting Educators’ Cultural Competence to Better Serve Culturally Diverse Students”

National Education Association (*Author*)

NEA: 2008

This NEA Policy Brief examines the issues of changing school diversity and recommends skills, knowledge, and attitudes educators need to possess in order to cultivate the strengths of all students. It is available as a free PDF [download](#)^{lxv}.

Teacher Reference: Grades K-12

^{lxviii} www.indiewire.com or www.imdb.com

^{lxiv} <http://www.teachwithmovies.org/>

^{lxv} http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/PB13_CulturalCompetence08.pdf

Reading with Meaning: Teaching Comprehension in the Primary Grades

Debbie Miller(Author)

Stenhouse Publishers: 2013

In this revised and updated second edition, the teacher-author shares her newest thinking about comprehension strategy instruction, her “gradual release of responsibility” instructional model, and planning for student engagement and independence. This is a valuable tool for any teacher looking to improve their ability to teach comprehension strategies to emerging readers. These same strategies could also be applied to assist older reluctant readers. The book leads teachers through the course of a year in her classroom, showing how students learn to become thoughtful, independent, and strategic readers, through explicit instruction, modeling, classroom discussion, and, gradually releasing responsibility to her students, Debbie suggests a model for creating a climate and culture of thinking and learning. Content includes: techniques for modeling thinking; specific examples of modeled strategy lessons for inferring, asking questions, making connections, determining importance in text, creating mental images, and synthesizing information; techniques to help children make their thinking visible through oral, written, artistic, and dramatic responses to literature; the use of book clubs as a sharing strategy.

Teacher Reference: *Grades K-3 (may be adapted with reluctant readers through Grade 8)*

Rethinking Our Classrooms: Teaching for Equity and Justice (Vol 1, Revised)

Wayne Au, Bill Bigelow, and Stan Karp (Author/Editors)

Rethinking Schools, Ltd.: 2007

This expanded edition draws from best practices in social justice curriculum and pedagogy presented in a collection of over seventy essays from a diverse group of educators, authors and other notables. It includes new essays on science, environmental studies, immigration and language, military recruitment, and gay and lesbian issues, and tips to analyze student literature for racism and sexism. This teacher-training tool offers creative teaching ideas, classroom narratives, hands-on examples and strategies to promote values about community, justice, and equality while building academic skills. New and veteran K-12 teachers will find this resource useful. Use it as part of ongoing staff development, study groups or Staff Discussion Groups. Selected essays may be appropriate to spark student debates in Grades 9-12.

Teacher Reference: *Grades K-12*

Skin That We Speak, The: Thoughts on Language and Culture in the Classroom

Lisa Delpit and JoAnne Kilgour Dowdy (Authors, Editors)

The New Press: 2008

Through a collection of thirteen essays, teacher-contributors offer firsthand perspectives that explore the varieties of English dialects we speak, the way biases about race, class, and privilege affect views of non-standard English, and the impact those notions about dialects has on the academic success and ultimate outcome of all students. The book raises many issues and questions that challenge us, regardless of our own personal heritage, to reconsider not just our own biases, but what’s needed to help all students feel welcome in school so they can become successful learners. This updated edition includes an extended new piece by author Delpit; contributors include a diverse group of educators including Herbert Kohl, Jules Henry, Gloria Ladson-Billings, Victoria Purcell-Gates, Geneva Smitherman, Asa Hilliard and others. The collection as a whole explores the links between language and identity, and between language and cultural conflict. The tone of the collection is set by personal essays by two teachers: Dowdy, who was educated in

Trinidad, and Ernie Smith, who is from South Central Los Angeles. Both describe their own struggles to fit in as learners and their experiences with the conflicting views regarding the formal standard-English of school, and the corresponding devaluation of their home-language. Essays present both teachers' perspectives and student learners' viewpoints in K-12 classrooms and teacher training programs. While most essays focus on the experiences of Black students, those of White poor rural and working class students both in the US and UK are also presented. The quality of the essays varies (not all are scholarly) and the selected reference list has not been updated since 1997 (making it of limited value beyond providing an historical context).

Teacher Reference: *Grades K-12; Staff Development:* *Grades K-12*

Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down, The: A Hmong Child, Her American Doctors, and the Collision of Two Cultures

Anne Fadiman (*Author*)

Farrar, Straus and Giroux: 2012

This book chronicles the tragic life of a young Hmong epileptic girl and her family as they try to negotiate the complexities of the medical establishment. Told as a case study by various health care providers, it highlights problems that occur when communication and cross-cultural understanding is missing. A complete annotation for this book appears in the Student Literature Section for Grades 9-12, and describes its possible use with students. Whether or not it is used as a curriculum resource for older or more advanced readers/learners at the high school level, this book is an important resource for teachers. It is a particularly useful tool for any teacher who works with refugee or immigrant populations, to offer insights into the nature of cultural conflicts and why they occur, it also is important for anyone seeking to understand (and become more sensitive to) the effects that White privilege can have on our relationships with individuals who are culturally different from us. Staff may choose to use this as a faculty "study group" book, or during Staff Discussion Groups—questions and issues posed in the annotation in the Student Literature section also can be used with adults.

Teacher Resource: *Grades K-12; Curriculum Resource:* *Grades 11-12 (AP classes)*

"Using Multicultural Literature in Gifted Education Classrooms"

Donna Y. Ford, Tyrone C. Howard, and J. John Harris III (*Authors*)

In: *Language Arts for Gifted Children*, Susan K Johnson and James Kendrick (*Editors*)

Prufrock: 2005

This chapter discusses ways of identifying appropriate multicultural materials for gifted minority students and for exposing White students to diversity concepts and issues. The authors also reference James Banks' four-level model for integrating culturally competent material into the curriculum. While the principles offered are applicable to Grades K-12, the focus (on gifted education) will be most useful to teachers with older students, where this type of designation is more common. It is available online as a [Google Book](#)^{lxvi}.

Teacher Reference: *Grades K-12*

lxvi

<http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=3ly0mEcN4roC&oi=fnd&pg=PA43&dq=Using+Multicultural+Literature+in+Gifted+Education+Classrooms&ots=N7dI4WSs6z&sig=hDg242oOKPvAxYbL0rSx7K3V25k#v=onepage&q=Using%20Multicultural%20Literature%20in%20Gifted%20Education%20Classrooms&f=false>

“White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack”

Peggy McIntosh (*Author*)

From: White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences Through Work in Women’s Studies (Working Paper) *Wellesley Centers for Women: 1988*

This essay, excerpted from a longer paper, is considered a ‘classic’ by anti-racist educators and has been used as a staff development tool throughout the US and Canada. While people of color often describe how Whites benefit from unearned privileges, this is one of a few (and first) written by a White person. The [essay](#)^{lxvii} is available free in PDF format or the complete Working Paper, which includes a longer list of privileges, may be purchased from [Wellesley Centers for Women](#)^{lxviii}. The author suggests using this article as a staff training tool, read and discussed in small groups and followed by having each participant write a list of additional ways in which Whites are privileged in their own school and community settings. Alternatively, she suggests they keep a diary for the following week, recording incidents of White privilege that they notice (and in some cases challenge) in their daily lives, to be shared and discussed the following week.

Teacher Reference/Staff Development: Grades K-12

Whole Brain Teaching for Challenging Kids

Chris Biffle (*Author*)

Whole Brain Teaching LLC: 2013

The author offers an interesting approach to dealing with classroom management that has been effective in dealing with disruptive behaviors and poor student engagement. The methodology grew from the grassroots education reform efforts of three Southern California teachers, starting in 1999, and is based on research in the field of neuroscience. The underlying premise that actively engaging students is better than viewing them as proverbial “passive vessels” and strategies that rely on multiple modalities (i.e., using a combination of visual, auditory, tactile and kinesthetic cues) to improve learning are sound, but not new; and the presentation of information is sometimes disorganized, disjointed and prone to unnecessary superlatives (of the infomercial variety) to describe methods (e.g. five rules to create positive climate are referred to as “nuclear power!”). Some readers might find this style off-putting or even condescending; others will find it energizing and uplifting. Many teachers (particularly new teachers who lack effective behavior management skills and veteran teachers suffering from “burn-out” resulting from students’ challenging behaviors) have reported that the techniques have helped transform their classroom climates and promote positive engagement from students. Not surprisingly, those positive changes have improved the learning environment for all students as well as reduced teacher stress levels. While offered as a methodology for K-12 classrooms, many examples involve older students and techniques would need to be adapted for use with younger students. In contrast, the materials offered on the website (see below) provide more materials geared to Grades K-3.

Teacher Reference: Grades K-12 (less relevant for K-3)

lxvii <http://www.nymbp.org/reference/WhitePrivilege.pdf>

lxviii www.wcwonline.org

Periodicals

a Common Place Magazine

Web: mcc.org/acp

This free quarterly magazine for adults brings information about places and cultures from around the world, including: stories from the world's hot spots, profiles of spotlighted countries (including recipes and activities for children), and ideas about how to make a difference in helping to promote world peace and cross-cultural understanding. It is a publication of the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), a relief, service, community development and peace organization. While not a religious publication per se, it does promote some aspects of the spiritual vision of this faith-based organization.

Teacher Reference/Curriculum Resource: Grades K-12

Against the Current Magazine

Web: www.solidarity-us.org/atc

This magazine for adults is published six times a year and is available per issue (\$5/ea) or by annual subscription (\$25/individuals). It features the writing of activists and scholars with a global perspective on issues of social and global justice and covers issues such as: labor movement, feminism, anti-racism, independent politics, and antiwar activism in the United States and internationally. The perspective is decidedly left-leaning (termed “socialism from below”—which envisions a world “without exploiters or exploited”). While this may be viewed as a radical perspective by many, it offers a counterpoint to traditional media coverage. Teachers can choose to present specific concepts or points-of-view raised to spark debate among secondary students (Grades 9-12) as part of world history or discussion about events such as the Occupy movement, the Arab Spring, civil unrest or threats of war in Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and parts of Africa, and the global environmental crisis.

Teacher Reference: Grades 8-12; Curriculum Resource: Grades 9-12

Human Rights Watch

Web: <http://www.hrw.org>

Human Rights Watch is an independent, international organization that works as part of a vibrant movement to uphold human dignity and advance the cause of human rights for all. It provides online news analysis and resources from a human rights perspective; information is updated daily and often referenced by prominent media outlets. The mission of the group is to defend the rights of people worldwide through publication of scrupulously investigated topics that spotlight human rights abuses and puts pressure on those with power to respect rights and secure justice. This is a great teacher reference to stay informed on current issues of global importance. The site also would serve as a curriculum resource for use in Grades 9-12; because of its focus, it can contain graphic information that teachers may want to screen or select from.

Teacher Reference: Grades K-12; Curriculum Resource: Grades 9-12

Rethinking Schools Magazine

Web: <http://www.rethinkingschools.org>

This quarterly educational magazine is available in a variety of formats and subscription “packages” (ranging from about \$13-\$28/year). Each issue is filled with innovative teaching ideas, valuable resources, and analyses of important issues. Its mission is to support educators who want to engage students in thinking deeply and critically about the world they live in. Past issues are archived on the website and available for individual purchase.

Teacher Reference: Grades K-12

SamaritanMag

Web: <http://www.samaritanmag.com>

SamaritanMag is a Canadian-based weekly online periodical that generates original news stories covering the good deeds of individuals, charities and businesses to present information, incentive and impetus for others to do the same. They recognize that individuals of all ages are showing increased willingness to give back, whether through volunteer efforts, charitable donation, or steps at home to better society. Businesses are doing the same, practicing corporate social responsibility. Topics addressed include: poverty, global warming, HIV/AIDS, cancer, animal welfare, childhood obesity, war and diverse social and humanitarian issues. This has information that can be useful to teachers in US schools as it through articles on international issues, including interviews with notables here in the US and issues relevant to students here. Secondary level teachers may also find this an appropriate curriculum resource for students in Grades 8-12; selected articles will appeal to teens.

Teacher Reference: Grades K-12; Curriculum Resource: Grades 8-12

Skippping Stones: A Multicultural Magazine

Web: www.SkipppingStones.org

Founded in 1988 this magazine geared to students in Grades 2-12 and adults who care and work with them and is published five times a year. It is available as a subscription on a sliding scale for individuals (\$12.50-\$25/yr) and Institutions (\$35/yr). It is advertisement-free and features creative art and writing by youth (and adults) worldwide, with themes that encourage cooperation, creativity, celebrate cultural and ecological richness, nurture diverse perspectives (including from minorities and underrepresented populations). Produced by a multicultural staff and volunteers, the magazine facilitates a meaningful exchange of ideas and experiences, writing and artwork that challenge readers to think, learn, cooperate and create. Each issue contains book reviews, news and articles appropriate for parents and teachers. Non-English writings are accompanied by English translation. This is an interesting resource; because it offers options suited to students of many ages, as well as adults, it is best used as a teacher reference, or as a curriculum resource with the caution that teachers review and select specific items that would be developmentally appropriate and of interest to their students.

Teacher Reference: Grades 2-12

Teaching Tolerance Magazine

Web: www.tolerance.org

This magazine (free to teachers) is published twice a year and is a product of Teaching Tolerance (founded in 1991 by the Southern Poverty Law Center). The topics cover a wide range of issues in interesting and thought-provoking articles that help teachers create a bias-free classroom. The organization maintains a substantial archive of magazine issues which can be accessed digitally.

Teacher Reference: Grades 2-12

Websites

Note: While the content of each of the following sites was reviewed prior to listing, it was not possible to evaluate all links or services provided. In addition, even the many well-known and highly reputable sites listed below offer resources and materials that vary in quality and all are subject to change over time. Consumers are advised to visit and review each before giving students direct access to sites, and to selectively screen all material.

American Civil Liberties Union

<https://www.aclu.org>

The ACLU is our nation's guardian of liberty, working daily in courts, legislatures and communities to defend and preserve the individual rights and liberties guaranteed under the US Constitution and laws. The ACLU is most well known for their work in four major areas: protection of First Amendment Rights; protection against unlawful discrimination (for defined “protected classes” of individuals; right to due process; and right to privacy (from unwarranted government intrusion). They also take a leading role to extend rights to vulnerable populations that have traditionally been denied their rights, including people of color; women; lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgender people; prisoners; and people with disabilities. While there are many issues on this site that might assist teachers in planning curricula for students, the “Take Action Center” and sections providing latest news and legislative action (including Supreme Court decisions) are likely to be the most useful (and could be used as a basis for creating vignettes for problem solving with students in Grades 6-12).

Teacher Reference: Grades preK-12& Adult; **Curriculum Resource:** Grades preK-12

Anti-Defamation League

www.adl.org

The ADL is a leading provider of anti-bias and diversity education training programs for preK-12 schools, colleges, workplaces, and community organizations across the US and internationally. Two programs of note include [A World of Difference Institute](http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/anti-bias-education/c/a-world-of-difference.html#U6YyLJRdUdw)^{lxix} which also includes opportunities for peer training and the [No Place for Hate Initiative](http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/no-place-for-hate)^{lxx} which offers schools and communities with an organizing framework for combating bias, bullying and hatred, leading to long-term solutions for creating and maintaining a positive climate. The materials on diversity on this site are generally of high quality; resources about bullying tend to be of less consistent quality (and don't always mesh with research and best practices in the field of bullying prevention).

Teacher Reference: Grades preK-12& Adult; **Curriculum Resource:** Grades preK-12

lxix <http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/anti-bias-education/c/a-world-of-difference.html#U6YyLJRdUdw>

lxx <http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/no-place-for-hate>

Brown Bookshelf

<http://thebrownbookshelf.com>

Children's author Kelly Starling Lyons established this blog with other Black authors and illustrators to encourage young Black to become more aware of voices that reflect their racial, and ethnic experiences. It includes author profiles, book reviews, and an initiative called 28 Days Later, a month-long showcase of the best in Picture Books, Middle Grade and Young Adult novels written and illustrated by Black Americans.

Teacher Reference: Grades K-12; Curriculum Resource: Grades 5-12

Children's Defense Fund

<http://childrendefense.org>

The Children's Defense fund is a national (US) non-profit child advocacy organization whose mission is to ensure a level playing field for all children by championing policies and programs that lift children out of poverty; protect them from abuse and neglect; and ensure their access to health care, quality education and a moral and spiritual foundation. It supplies a wealth of information, statistics, initiatives, resources and articles on the welfare of children in the US. Selected information and materials can be integrated into academic curricula as well as Class Meetings.

Teacher Reference: Grades preK-12& Adult; Curriculum Resource: Grades K-12

COLAGE

www.colage.org

COLAGE is a national (US) organization which unites children, youth and adults with one or more LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and/or queer) parents. It helps to create/build community for these families and works toward social justice through education, advocacy, mentoring and youth empowerment, and leadership development.

Teacher Reference: Grades K-12

Diversity Training University International

<http://dtui.com>

DTUI is a free-standing corporate university providing diversity training and certification for educators, instructional design, organizational development services, and works to establish standards in the field. Their blog keeps pace with current issues (and is based on scholarly articles) and offers reference materials along with Strategic Diversity & Inclusion Management Magazine (not reviewed).

Teacher Reference: Grades K-12

Educators for Social Responsibility

www.esrnational.org

Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR) works directly with educators to implement practices that create safe, caring and equitable schools that ensure student success and help shape a democratic and just world. A national leader in school reform, ESR produces many educational materials (Preschool-Grade 12), professional development, and consultation.

Teacher Reference: Grades K-12; **Curriculum Resources:** Grades pre-K-12

Edutopia

www.edutopia.org

Edutopia is committed to improving the K-12 learning process through innovative, replicable, and evidence-based strategies that prepare students to thrive in their studies, careers, and adult lives. There are many resources, articles and teaching strategies available on this site, which includes their popular “Schools that Work.” The many topics include: diversity, comprehensive assessments, integrated studies, project-based learning, brain-based learning, classroom management, social and emotional learning, teacher development and integrating technology.

Teacher Reference: Grades K-12; **Curriculum Resources:** Grades K-12

Facing History and Ourselves

www.facinghistory.org

Facing History and Ourselves is an international educational organization and professional development organization whose mission is to engage students of diverse backgrounds in an examination of racism, prejudice, and anti-Semitism in order to promote the development of a more humane and informed citizenry. By studying the historical development of the Holocaust and other examples of genocide, students make the essential connection between history and the moral choices they confront in their own lives. It supplies a variety of teacher resource materials for Grades K-12 (including free downloadable lessons and units, teaching strategies, audio-visual materials and publications for purchase), staff development opportunities, and coaching.

Teacher Reference: Grades K-12; ; **Curriculum Resources:** Grades K-12

Girls for a Change

www.GirlsforaChange.org

Girls for a Change is a national organization that empowers middle and high school girls from diverse communities to create social change by providing the tools, resources, and support they need to design, lead, fund and implement social change on issues they face in their own neighborhoods. This site is designed for use by girls independently, and includes lots of free information, including action kits for personal health and community change. Teachers are encouraged to preview the site and to explore it with girls for materials appropriate for your students.

Curriculum Resource: Grades 6-12

Girls Incorporated

www.girlsinc.org

Girls Incorporated is a non-profit organization in the US and Canada that inspires all girls (Grades K-12) to be strong, smart, and bold through life-changing programs and experiences that help girls navigate gender, economic, and social barriers. The organization responds to the changing needs of girls and their communities through the use of research-based curricula, delivered by trained, mentoring professionals in a positive all-girl environment. This movement started in New England during the Industrial Revolution as a response to the needs of a new working class: young women who had migrated from rural communities in search of newly available job opportunities in textile mills and factories. There is a separate interactive section on the website where girls can share aspirations (I am/I can do/I can be/I belong) which seems most appropriate for girls in Grades 5-12 (with adult with guidance for girls in Grades 5-8).

Teacher Reference: Grades K-12; **Curriculum Resource:** Grades 5-12

Human Rights Campaign

www.hrc.org

Founded in 1980, the Human Rights Campaign is America's largest civil rights organization working to achieve lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality. By inspiring and engaging all Americans (including straight allies), HRC strives to end discrimination against LGBT citizens and realize a nation that achieves fundamental fairness and equality for all. The organization is a political lobby group which publishes a magazine that is free with membership (a non-tax deductible donation). The website provides information about a range of issues mostly geared towards adults, but some (about youth and school campuses, allies, coming out, transgender, parenting, hate crimes, and immigration), may be suitable to share with teens, or as appropriate (depending on the topic and individual needs). Other resources for parents and school personnel include concrete tips about how to answer questions like "[What does 'gay' mean?](#)".

Teacher and Parent Resource/Reference: Grades K-12; **Curriculum Resource:** Grades 6-12

Making Caring Common Project

<http://sites.gse.harvard.edu/making-caring-common>

- Making Caring Common is a new (2014) and still evolving project of the Harvard University Graduate School of Education. The goal of the project is to help educators, parents, and communities raise children who are caring, respectful, and responsible toward others and their communities. Project initiatives include teacher training (with upcoming events posted on the site), resource materials, cutting-edge research and other publications on topics that include school climate, social emotional learning, building a positive school community, teen romantic relationships and bullying prevention. Though work on this project, the website and its contents are still emerging, the Graduate School of Education is known for its cutting-edge work combining research and education practice on other issues. As this bibliography goes to press, there are currently several tools on the drop down menu for schools, as well as limited information and links on the others. The project's [Facebook page](#) also contains updates and quick links to the project webpage and articles on "hot topics" related to the project's focus, which would be an excellent resource for staff development, study groups with faculty and parents, Staff Discussion Groups, and possibly teens.

Teacher Reference: Grades K-12; **Staff Development:** K-12; **Curriculum Resource:** K-12

lxxi <http://www.hrc.org/resources/entry/talking-with-kids-about-lgbt-issues>

Mic (formerly PolicyMic)

<http://mic.com> (note new website, as of mid-2014: formerly, www.policymic.com)

Mic (formerly PolicyMic) is founded on the idea that young people should have access to a news destination that offers quality coverage tailored to their interests (with a look towards changing and improving the world of their future). This alternative news media outlet is designed to keep young people informed, make sense of the world, and inspire meaningful change in the coming decades. While the audience is not specifically defined, the articles are thought-provoking for readers from older teens to adults, and tend to focus on current events, global concerns, and political issues that are related to diversity, personal freedoms, the environment, and human rights. The issues and approach will interest and challenge young people who have a healthy skepticism for conventional wisdom. It is recommended that teachers wishing to use this site with students screen the site to determine its appropriateness for your students (in particular, for potentially disturbing images of violence or content not deemed appropriate for the classroom). Whether giving students direct site access (Grades 9-12), or selecting specific topics for classroom use (Grades 7-12), many articles can spark interesting conversations. Access [articles](#)^{lxii} directly or go to their [Facebook page](#)^{lxiii}.

Teacher Reference: Grades 6-12; **Classroom Resource:** Grades 9-12 (possibly Grades 7-8, selected)

Museum of Tolerance

<http://www.museumoftolerance.com> (LA)

<http://www.museumoftolerancenewyork.com> (NYC)

The Museum of Tolerance, which has locations in Los Angeles and New York City, is a human rights laboratory and educational center dedicated to building understanding about the Holocaust in both historic and contemporary contexts, and to confront all forms of prejudice and discrimination in our world today. The Museum also provides training for teachers and (through the Simon Wiesenthal Center), speakers on human rights issues from around the world (e.g. the Dalai Lama) and partners with organizations such as the Coalition Against Slavery and Trafficking and the NAACP). The websites of each Museum contains slightly different resources (linked to current exhibits) and include some resources and links in Spanish. Links under “Education” and “For Professionals” Tabs (in addition to the main “What’s Happening” links) will be most useful for teachers looking for classroom curriculum ideas and materials linked to social studies or history curricula. Teachers may find some links appropriate to share directly with students.

Teacher Reference: Grades 3-12; **Classroom Resource:** Grades 3-12

National Association for Multicultural Education

www.nameorg.org

NAME is a membership organization that brings together individuals and groups interested in promoting multicultural education at all levels, from different academic disciplines, and diverse educational institutions and occupations. The national site lists links to state chapters and other resources.

Teacher Reference: Grades K-12

lxii <http://mic.com/articles>

lxiii <https://www.facebook.com/MicMedia>.

National Education Association

www.nea.org

The NEA is the largest professional employee organization for advancing the cause of public education in the US; it represents members in all fifty states and at every level of education (from preschool to graduate education programs). In addition, it offers a wide variety of policy papers, publications, resources, links, and teacher-training opportunities. Its Human and Civil Rights department supplies training and resources to help educators advance social justice and equity for students and themselves.

Teacher Reference: Grades K-12

Office for Civil Rights

<http://www2.ed.gov>

The mission of the US Office for Civil Rights (part of the US Department of Education) is to ensure equal access to education and to promote educational excellence throughout the nation through vigorous enforcement of civil rights (including Title IX and IDEA). This federal agency serves students facing discrimination and advocates for them and educational institutions to promote systemic solutions to civil rights problems. An important responsibility is resolving complaints of discrimination, but policy statements and Dear Colleague letters such as those that appear above (often jointly with the US Department of Education) offer guidance for school staff on ways of insuring student rights—including race, gender, religion, and sexual preference.

Teacher Reference: Grades K-12

Pact

<http://www.pactadopt.org>

Pact is a non-profit racially diverse organization whose mission is to serve adopted children of color, with a primary focus on the needs of the child. In addition to adoptive placement services, the organization also offers lifelong education, support, and community for adoptees and their families on the issues of adoption and race. The website includes materials and resource information for both school faculty and guidance staff seeking to better understand the needs of this group of children and their families.

Teacher/Counseling Reference: Grades K-12

Rethinking Schools

<http://www.rethinkingschools.org/>

Rethinking Schools is a nonprofit publisher and advocacy organization dedicated to sustaining and strengthening public education through social justice teaching and education activism. They offer a magazine, books, and resources promoting equity and racial justice in the classroom. They focus on building broad grassroots democratic movements for social and environmental justice.

Teacher Reference: Grades K-12

Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity (SEED)

Wellesley Centers for Women

www.wcwonline.org

SEED is a staff-development equity project founded by feminist and anti-racism activist Peggy MacIntosh. The project provides teacher-led faculty-development seminars on “gender-fair,” multiculturally equitable, socioeconomically aware, and globally informed curricula for public and private schools throughout the US and in the English-speaking international school community.

Teacher Reference: Grades K-12

Stopbullying.gov

<http://www.stopbullying.gov>

This federally-sponsored website is a multi-agency collaborative effort of the US Departments of Education, Health and Human Services (including the CDC, HRSA, ASPE, and SAMHSA) and Justice. It acts as a clearinghouse for an ever-growing base of information from various government agencies on [what bullying is](#)^{lxxiv}, [what cyber bullying is](#)^{lxxv}, [who is at risk](#)^{lxxvi}, and how you can [prevent](#)^{lxxvii} and [respond to bullying](#)^{lxxviii} and coordinates closely with researchers, practioners, and experts in the field to coordinate policy, research, and communications on bullying topics. The advisory partners continue to make an ongoing effort to unify things like definitions and practices, to reduce confusion. There are both print and interactive resources (including audio visual materials) geared to populations including students, teachers and administrators, mental health professionals, parents, and community organizations. Materials and images on the site reflect a commitment to responding to a culturally diverse population, including LGBT youth. Documents are free (and with a few exceptions) are in the public domain and are able to be downloaded and copied. Some materials are available in Spanish or close caption and the site also offers [emergency hotline](#)^{lxxix} information

Teacher/Counseling Reference: Grades K-12; Curriculum Resource: Grades K-12; Parent/Community Reference: Grades K-12

Teaching Tolerance

www.tolerance.org

A project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, Teaching Tolerance promotes a respect for differences and an appreciation for diversity in the classroom. It also serves as a national clearing house of information about anti-bias programs and activities for schools. It is a leading provider of free anti-bias classroom resources, curriculum materials, film kits and professional development to teachers which are continuously being updated and expanded. The popular Teaching Tolerance Magazine and initiatives (such as “Mix It Up”) are based in theory and practice and used in classrooms and schools across the country.

Teacher Reference: Grades K-12; Curriculum Resource: K-12

^{lxxiv} <http://www.stopbullying.gov/what-is-bullying/index.html>

^{lxxv} <http://www.stopbullying.gov/cyberbullying/what-is-it/index.html>

^{lxxvi} <http://www.stopbullying.gov/at-risk/index.html>

^{lxxvii} <http://www.stopbullying.gov/prevention/index.html>

^{lxxviii} <http://www.stopbullying.gov/respond/index.html>

^{lxxix} <http://www.stopbullying.gov/get-help-now/index.html>

TED

www.TED.com

TED is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to spreading ideas, usually in the form of short, powerful talks (18 minutes or less). TED was established in 1984 as a conference where Technology, Entertainment and Design converged, but today covers almost all topics—from science, religion, education, business, to global issues such as human rights and the environment—in more than 100 languages. TED is a global community, welcoming people from every discipline and culture who seek a deeper understanding of the world; independently run TEDx events help share ideas in communities around the world. This site offers a growing clearinghouse of free knowledge from the world's most inspired thinkers, engaging in idea-sharing both online and at TED and TEDx events around the world. Link directly to the 1700+ talks at to [browse](http://www.ted.com/talks/browse)^{lxxx} (by date or topic). Select from these brief intriguing talks (also featured on National Public Radio stations) to introduce students to new people, ideas and perspectives from around the world and to spark lively discussion (particularly with students in Grades 6-12). The talks can also serve as a basis for learning and discussion for adults—as part of Staff Discussion Groups, staff development, and parent/community workshops on issues of diversity, education, human rights issues, environmental concerns, etc.

Teacher Reference: Grades K-12; **Curriculum Resource:** Grades 6-12; **Parent/Community Resource:** Grades K-12

United Nations CyberSchoolBus

<http://cyberschoolbus.un.org>

The UN CyberSchoolBus, created in 1996, is the online education component of the Global Teaching and Learning Project, whose mission is to promote education about international issues and the UN. The site disseminates high quality teaching materials and activities designed for educational use in Grades K-12), and teacher training teachers. The vision of this Project is to provide exceptional educational resources (both online and in print) to students growing up in a world undergoing increased globalization. The CyberSchoolBus relies on the growing potential of the Internet as an educational tool to disseminate information and resources about international affairs, as well as bring together diverse communities of students and educators from around the world, and includes activities and projects that teach students about global issues, show them that they have a role in finding solutions to global problems, and give students a voice in global issues. The interactive, engaging and fun activities and continually evolving projects (which currently include curriculum materials on human rights issues) are an invaluable resource for teachers interested in helping students to become better global citizens.

Teacher Reference: Grades K-12; **Curriculum Resource:** Grades K-12

lxxx <http://www.ted.com/talks/browse>

UNICEF

<http://www.unicef.org>

The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), established in 1946 by the UN General Assembly to support long-term humanitarian and developmental assistance to children and mothers in developing countries, is the driving force that helps build a world where the rights of every child are realized. UNICEF has the global authority to influence decision-makers and its grassroots partners work to turn innovative ideas into reality—both aspects that make this organization unique in working with others to overcome obstacles such as poverty, violence, disease and discrimination. Among current noteworthy efforts are those to promote girls’ education, working to reduce child-slavery and sex trafficking, along with worldwide immunization programs that promote child health. Though this site does not offer curriculum resources as such, there are several items of interest for teachers and students. For teachers, the annual “State of the World’s Children” reports and an easy-to-navigate blog gives up-to-date information about current issues affecting children’s health, wellbeing, and rights that will keep educators up-to-date about topics that can be brought into the classroom, to help students become better thinkers and global citizens. For students, curriculum resources such as the “kid friendly” [poster](#)^{lxxxi} of the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child (Grades 2-12), and several videos can help build awareness and empathy in ways that are powerful, accessible and developmentally appropriate. Videos include: “[Lullaby](#)”^{lxxxii}, a five-minute video of text-free still images of children set to the official UNICEF anthem (Grades K-2); “[For Every Child](#)”^{lxxxiii}, a similar five-minute video which includes simple text (Grades 3-8), and music videos from teen/young adult UN Ambassadors (such as Selena Gomez and Katie Perry) which will appeal to students in Grades 6-12; all this help highlight the importance of realizing children's rights.

Teacher Reference: Grades K-12; **Curriculum Resource:** Grades K-12 (selected links)

Whole Brain Teaching

www.WholeBrainTeaching.com

Operated by Whole Brain Teachers of America, this grass roots education reform movement helps K-12 teachers deal with common challenging student behaviors (e.g. lack of self control and discipline, difficulty with fundamental problem-solving skills, poor academic performance) by creating peaceful classrooms “full of orderly fun.” This site offers free teacher training seminars and a wealth of free resources: tip sheets, lessons, strategies, videos, and electronic books. Because there is so much information, referring to the site map is recommended. Some of the style of this site is reminiscent of infomercials—which some teachers may find off-putting—and not all of the materials are of even quality. However, teachers are bound to find some useful information here that they can use and adapt in their quest to create more organized, disciplined (and fun) classrooms. (See above for teacher reference book [Whole Brain Teaching for Challenging Kids](#))

Teacher Reference: Grades K-12 ; **Curriculum Resource:** Grades K-12

lxxxi <http://www.unicef.org/rightsite/files/uncrcchilddfriendinglanguage.pdf>

lxxxii <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VK61mWZuiGc>

lxxxiii www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mmy9MpwyKnQ

Youth Voice Project

<http://youthvoiceproject.com>

The Youth Voice Project is a research project that has asked 13,000 teens in 31 schools to define what strategies were effective in deterring and responding to peer bullying—and which were either ineffective or made the problem worse. The website offers some selected study findings as well as some supplemental support materials about bullying. It also offers a link to purchase the complete study findings (Youth Voice Project, *Research Press: 2013*) (not reviewed). While information about the study findings may be helpful for all Grade K-12 teachers to read as they reflect on their own practices responding to student bullying behavior, the study interviewed students in Grades 5-12 (of whom 50% were White and 51% male, and the majority were in grades 6-8); information regarding experiences of student of different ethnicities is not supplied.

Teacher Reference: Grades 5-12



Nancy L. Mullin, M.Ed.

Nancy Mullin is an educator and the Director of Bullying Prevention Solutions in Raleigh, NC where she provides consultation and training about bullying prevention and intervention for preschools and grades K-12. Ms. Mullin's nationally-known work emphasizes linking bullying prevention themes to classroom curriculum and reducing the negative impact of bullying and gender-role stereotypes on school climate and student performance. Her work also emphasizes the importance of including bullying prevention themes in classroom curriculum.

Ms. Mullin has authored and co-authored numerous books and curriculum support materials including the *Olweus Companion Bibliography for Grades K-12* (2009); the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program Class Meetings that Matter* series (2009-2012), the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program Schoolwide Guide* (2007) and *Teacher Guide* (2007); *Quit It!: A Teacher's Guide on Teasing and Bullying for Use With Students in Grades K-3* (1998); and *Teaching Children to Care: An Empathy Curriculum for Preschool* (1997).

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Nancy

About the Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention

The **Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (CHPDP)** is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of children and adults through the systematic implementation of evidence-based public health programs. Originally established in 1997 as the Office of Community Health, CHPDP is at the forefront of efforts to integrate health promotion and disease prevention activities in schools and communities.

With a dedicated approach to prevention, health promotion and wellness, we strive to be the catalyst for positive change at the individual, school and community level in an effort to achieve better health for all. The CHPDP's dedicated staff utilizes the science, practices and theories of public health to further advance our work. The CHPDP is staffed with professionals with backgrounds in medicine, nursing, education, public health and social work and expertise in implementation, evaluation and program development. Our office supports health systems, businesses, communities and schools in identifying, implementing and monitoring evidence-based health and wellness programs. Our ultimate goal is to enable and empower populations pursuing better health.

A major focus of the CHPDP's work over the past 10 years has been to make schools safer for children through effective bullying prevention strategies. Our office serves as a bullying prevention resource to many agencies and organizations throughout the United States and several in Europe. The CHPDP has presented its work at numerous national and international conferences. Its staff has served as editors and chapter authors for the book "*A Public Health Approach to Bullying Prevention*" which was published in 2013 by the American Public Health Association.

For more information about the Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention visit us at www.chpdp.org.