

Utilizing Mirrors and Windows in Elementary Literacy to Build Identity and Empathy

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A Minnesota-transplant, Hannah is originally from West Des Moines, Iowa, and brings with her previous teaching experiences from Houston, Texas, and Overland Park, Kansas. After graduating from Iowa State University with a degree in Elementary Education, Hannah realized that literacy reform was a pressing issue across the board. This led her to pursue a master's degree in Reading at Minnesota State University, Mankato the following year. When she's not teaching, you can find Hannah reading, hosting a dinner party, or taking a walk around Lake Harriet.

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to establish a purpose for mirrors and windows (Bishop, 1990) in the modern elementary context. This article will explore the way in which identity, motivation, and empathy are established through connections and contrasts students make with texts. Teachers are encouraged to branch out of traditionally homogenous literature to foster classroom community and reach for equity. Teachers and practitioners will find a list of original-voice texts featuring racially and culturally diverse characters to guide them in their journey to equity.

Keywords:

Mirrors: Texts wherein a student can connect with the story, a character, or an event. Mirror texts seem to mimic or “mirror” student’s life experiences or thoughts.

Windows: Texts that present a view different from a student’s life. Window texts show students what other people’s experiences and thoughts might be.

Original Voice: indicates that the author is a person who belongs to the cultural or racial group featured in the book. Original voice validates a text by ensuring authentic representation of individuals.

In a time when teachers are increasingly focusing on culturally responsive practices and closing opportunity gaps, a deeper, consistent connection between students and the curriculum is needed. “Mirrors” and “windows” can provide this bridge. Rudine Sims Bishop defines mirrors as children’s books in which students see themselves reflected, in which they personally connect to the texts (Bishop, 1990). Mirrors can connect content and students, because students can establish a deeper sense of self, belonging, and identity through reading mirror texts. Conversely, windows provide students an opportunity to expand their horizons and learn about others (Bishop, 1990; Allan, 2016). Learning about others can solidify students’ understanding of themselves even further by providing a wider, global context for their own identity (Tschida, Ryan, & Ticknor, 2014; Masko & Bloem, 2017). Children have a basic need to feel a sense of belonging and acceptance within their community; mirrors and windows effectively work towards this goal by showing students how their experiences are simultaneously reflected in the lives of others and made unique in comparison to others.

Texts providing windows and mirrors are integral to students’ feeling of belonging in a community, strengthen children’s foundation of their own identity, and increase their compassion for others (Turner & Kim, 2005). A sense of belonging in a community can initiate some of the most critical skills for students’ reading success, namely increased motivation and engagement (Hughes-Hassell, Barkley, & Koehler, 2009). Because reading proficiency is necessary for success in other academic areas, and ultimately, career success (Jones, Barnes, Baily, & Doolittle, 2017), all teachers should be actively seeking mirror and window texts for

their students as an essential equity practice (Jones, Barnes, Bailey, & Doolittle, 2017).

Recognizing this need for mirror texts, teachers must also remember that mirror text selection should not simply be a matter of identifying the child's race or presumed culture and finding books to accompany it (Hefflin & Barksdale-Ladd, 2001). Rather, the teacher should aim to attend to students' self-identification and reading preferences. Teachers should be mindful that their male students might connect more deeply with Wonder Woman than Superman depending on their conscious or subconscious gender identity and play preferences. A student who identifies as biracial or multiracial might identify more with one racial group than the other. The details of a child's identity are critical for true connection to reading experiences; broad categories like "black children" and "Asian children" are incomplete. There will likely be stories that students connect with that will surprise teachers. This is because no one teacher can truly know a student's full identity or story, but rather the student should be given the opportunity through literature to reveal it to the teacher themselves (Tschida, Ryan, & Ticknor, 2014). This can be done through conversations and activities surrounding literature, which is discussed in the table below.

In many cases, books including racially and culturally diverse characters can be used in place of essentially any curriculum texts that may be required in a school district. For example, character study traditionally done with chapter books like *Magic Tree House* could be done with *The Stories Julian Tells* to highlight a black child's experiences with his family and imagination. This is an important

replacement practice because many literacy curriculum resources provide predominantly white, middle-class children's books. Replacing these ethnocentric texts with texts that represent a wider range identities and lived experiences can accomplish the same educational goals while being more inclusive to members of the classroom community. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to establish reasons for using mirrors and windows and equip teachers with specific texts they can use immediately in their own classrooms.

Review of Literature

Texts as Windows and Mirrors

Both mirrors and windows are not only a necessity, but also an inherent right each child has. Mirrors show students stories they can relate to and affirm their belonging to a particular group or space where the story is shared (Tschida, Ryan, & Ticknor, 2014). Windows might expose students to new, unfamiliar experiences or may show a familiar experience through the lens of someone with a different identity. The balance of these two categories is what brings students in a classroom community closer together. This kind of balance requires an awareness of which students are connecting deeply with teachers' literature selections and which students are learning about others through them. An appropriate balance would allow for all students to regularly experience both mirrors and windows.

Texts that serve as mirrors and windows should not be optional. Rather, using texts as windows and mirrors honors students' identities and provides more inclusive teaching. While this has been a hotly debated topic in the United States,

the International Literacy Association asserts, “Children have a right to read texts that mirror their experiences and languages, provide windows into the lives of others, and open doors into our diverse world.” (International Literacy Association, 2018). Indeed, when these texts are absent, members of a classroom community are often excluded. There is a need for active participation through connections, discussions, and reflection in literacy communities in order for students to grow as readers (Turner & Kim, 2005). This focus on community has become the heart of literacy reforms, because one of *the* best ways to encourage active participation around books is to include mirror and window books that provide the entry point for connections to personal experiences (Turner & Kim, 2005).

Texts as Mirrors

Students have a right to read texts in which they see their own race, their ethnicity, their cultural traditions, their gender identity, or their familial patterns. Children are often able to connect with a text personally when they are able to see themselves in a text (Hughes-Hassell, Barkley, & Koehler, 2009). Reading about characters and events that are familiar to them can also help students build a positive cultural and racial identity, which can increase personal motivation (Marinak & Gambrell, 2016). Considerable evidence suggests that when students have access to mirrors in their classrooms, they are not only more successful readers, they are more motivated readers who are more proficient across all subjects (Marinak & Gambrell, 2016; Miles & Stipek, 2006). When access to mirror

texts is lacking, students can begin to question their belonging within the classroom, impacting success in all academic areas (DeLeón , 2002).

Teachers should be careful not to make swift, shallow judgments about mirror texts for their students. Students' mirrors should be as they view themselves, not as the teachers and peers view them, meaning that teachers need to provide opportunities for students to share that self-identification with them. For example, asking, "Which characters do you connect with? Why?" Teachers should avoid using books about "Latinx" people or "Black people" to mirror entire racial groups. Rather, teachers should search for books about specific groups, such as Ecuadorian families, South African families, or Nepalese families (DeLeón, 2002). Ideally, students will be the ones telling teachers which books they find to be a mirror for them. The most authentic and natural identity is that which the students claim for themselves. After practicing discussions around identity, students should be given opportunities to write about themselves and their experiences. This will not only help them establish these connections they are learning about themselves, but also to help the teacher understand them better, which will aid them in text selection. Because this process is a year-long endeavor, teachers must actively create ways to lead conversations around identity and connections to text.

Mirror texts validate students' experiences and identity as natural and shared by others (Tschida, Ryan, & Ticknor, 2014). When teachers do not provide these mirrors, they promote an ommissive viewpoint of that group, essentially leaving them out (DeLeón, 2002). This ommision not only damages the groups that are

missing out on their mirrors, but also overrepresented students (Tschida, Ryan, & Ticknor, 2014).

While it may seem that the overrepresented, typically white students, are set up for success due to the abundance of mirrors available to them in children's texts today, many are actually at risk for extreme ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism promotes an over-inflated sense of cultural importance and ignorance among groups (Tschida, Ryan, & Ticknor, 2014). Essentially, ethnocentrism is the juxtaposition students of color experience through the white-washed children's literature many teachers use today. Ethnocentrism damages both parties in this way as students of color are implicitly displayed as less important, while white students are subconsciously bolstered through an excessive amount of mirrors. This is dangerous for white students as it overinflates the role of white and European groups' importance while diminishing the importance of others, which leads to empathy disparity and a lack of connection with others. Windows can counter the ethnocentrism teachers and their students often experience in their classrooms.

Texts as Windows

Due to the structure of the social landscape in America and resulting racial segregation, many students may find that books are the only places they encounter people who are different from them (Al-Hazza & Bucher, 2008). These segregated life experiences are a massive deficit in American classrooms, because when students read texts about people who are different from them, they expand their social-emotional skills, compassion, and self-understanding (Masko & Bloem, 2017).

When working to foster authentic windows, original voice from the author critical. The “OwnVoices” movement in 2015 led a charge for authenticity in storytelling. Proponents argues that the text should be written from a person who belongs to the racial or cultural group described. This idea, referred to as “cultural authenticity,” helps maintain the integrity of the stories told. Many of our students read stories that show white people’s impressions of their race or culture (Hefflin & Barksdale-Ladd, 2001). This not only misrepresents many groups but perpetuates a white mindset and middle-class themes, effectively destroying the purpose of windows entirely (Boutte, Hopkins, & Waklatsi, 2008). As Jacqueline Woodson describes, after consistently experiencing white people’s perspectives of black people’s experiences, she realized, “I realized that no one but me can tell my story.” (Woodson, 1998). Just as each author gets to tell their story, children can see their story in combinations of author’s books. Children cannot be expected to develop positive self-identity and interpersonal skills if they are not equipped with culturally accurate stories.

Effects of Windows and Mirrors

The benefits from mirrors and windows are clear and undeniable, with implications for success that span far beyond reading at grade-level (Turner & Kim, 2005; Hughes-Hassell, Barkley, & Koehler, 2009; DeLeón, 2002). While reading narratives, movement systems and physical sensation receptors fire in readers’ brains, indicating that readers neurologically place themselves in the role of protagonists while reading. In addition, parts of the brain associated with empathy

were continuing to fire at higher rates even 24 hours after reading. This evidence shows long-lasting changes in the brain stemming from reading fictional stories (Masko & Bloem, 2017).

Students with a strong sense of identity and empathy will benefit from a number of positive results that stretch beyond their schooling years, including fewer peer conflicts, deeper friendships with others, higher performance across all academic areas, strengthened mental health in adulthood, and even increased career stability and success (Jones, Barnes, Bailey, & Doolittle, 2017). In the scope of all the inequity in the world today, this replacement practice proves to be an equity strategy that, through consistent implementation, could impact the students' lives far beyond their classroom years.

Application: Original Voice Texts for Elementary Classrooms

The section below provides teachers with books to address specific identity indicators such as: race, cultural group, family structure, and immigration experience. Each text is written by an author whose racial identity matches that of the main character and provides a specific example of a life experience or reflection from that author. The chart also includes standards from the Teaching Tolerance Anti-Bias Framework (ABF) that align well for each text (Teaching Tolerance, 2014). These standards are critical for consideration as owning these books is not enough to develop children's positive self-identity. The standards included provide a direction for teachers to lead productive discussion with each text; these standards were chosen specifically to assist in students' identity development. Because of this

goal, most of the standards are from the “Identity” and “Diversity” domains of the ABF framework. The texts are grouped by race, because finding books with people of color is one of the most pressing problems with modern classroom libraries (Hughes-Hassell, Barkley, & Koehler, 2009). True mirrors and windows are to show that all people have complex and multifaceted identities. Thus, for example, the experience of an Asian author might be a mirror for a Black student or an Indian student. Therefore, teachers should pre-read each text to understand its intricacy beyond race into nationality, socioeconomic status, and feelings.

Table 1

Children’s Books featuring Black Characters

| Book Title | Description | ABF Standards |
|--|---|--|
| <i>Crown: An Ode to the Fresh Cut</i> by Derrick Barnes | This book details the excitement a black boy feels about getting a new haircut. It celebrates self-esteem and swagger of young boys in a barbershop. This text utilizes sensory words and emotion language to convey the hallmark of black culture that is a “fresh cut.” | ID.K-2.5 (ID.3-5.5) I see that the way my family and I do things is both the same and different from how other people do things, and I am interested in both. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| <i>Thank You, Omu!</i> | Everyone in town comes to | DI.K-2.6 (DI.3-5.6) |
| By Oge Mora | Omu's house for a serving of her thick red stew! One by one, neighbors, police officers, the hot dog vendor, and many more come knocking for a bowl of her scrumptious stew. Omu's generosity leaves her with little left for herself until all those she fed return to share with her. This story of sharing, kindness, and community is perfect for young learners. | I like being around people who are like me and different from me, and I can be friendly to everyone. |
| <i>Hidden Figures</i> | This true story highlights the role four brilliant black female mathematicians played in launching the America's journeys into space. This unbelievable story shifts the lens away from the traditional faces of NASA towards the women who were trusted to run the numbers for them, by hand. | JU.3-5.12 (JU.K-2.12) |
| By Margot Lee Shetterly and Laura Freeman | | I know when people are treated unfairly, and I can give examples of prejudice words, pictures, and rules. |

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| <i>Hair Love</i> | <i>Hair Love</i> shows a young Zuri and her father working to find the perfect hairstyle. While Zuri loves that her hair can do so many different things, she struggles to find the perfect hair style for the day. With a little help from her dad, they try puffs, braids, a pick, and eventually find the perfect style. | ID.K-2.1 (ID.3-5.1) I know and like who I am and can talk about my family and myself and name some of my group identities. |
| By Matthew Cherry | | |
| <i>Violet's Music</i> | Violet can't stop making music! As she tries over and over to find someone to play music with her, she starts to realize everyone has different passions. But where are the other kids who love to play music? Violet finds her community by being herself. | ID.3-5.3 (ID.K-2.3) I know that all my group identities are part of who I am, but none of them fully describes me and this is true for other people too. |
| By Angela Johnson | | |
| <i>Max and the Tag-Along Moon</i> | Max carries the message from his grandpa with him everywhere, "That ol' moon will always shine for you, on and on." Max goes throughout his life and | DI.3-5.9 (DI.K-2.9) I feel connected to other people and know how to talk, work and play with others even when we are |
| By Floyd Cooper | | |

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|----------------------|--|---|
| | <p>night after night, looks for the moon to remind him of his grandpa’s presence. The moon captures the metaphor of the constancy and comfort of his grandfather’s love.</p> | <p>different or when we disagree.</p> |
| <i>Peter’s Chair</i> | <p>Peter’s new baby sister isn’t</p> | <p>DI.K-2.7 (DI.3-5.7)</p> |
| By Ezra Jack Keats | <p>quite as exciting for Peter as he might have thought. First, his cradle is painted pink, then they paint his high chair, and before they can paint his chair, Peter takes it with plans to run away with his dog, Willie. However, Peter’s plans must change when he realizes he has outgrown his childhood chair. This charming story highlights children’s shared feelings of fear.</p> | <p>I can describe some ways that I am similar to and different from people who share my identities and those who have other identities.</p> |

Table 2

Children’s Books featuring Native American Characters

| Book Title | Description | ABF Standard |
|----------------------------|---|--|
| <i>Shi-shi-etko</i> | Shi-shi-etko has four days before she will leave her family to attend school. She gathers memories and lessons from her parents and community before she has to go. Shi-shi-etko prepares to leave her family and takes with her all her family's traditions and stories. | DI.3-5.8 (DI.K-2.8) I want to know more about other people's lives and experiences, and I know how to ask questions respectfully and listen carefully and non-judgmentally. |
| <i>Jingle Dancer</i> | Jenna loves jingle dancing with her ancestors and has a dream to dance in the next powwow, but can't figure out how to get her dress to "sing" like the true jingle dancers. After she commits to dancing in place of her grandmother at the powwow, Jenna begins a hunt for the best jingles to make her dress sing. | DI.K-2.10 (DI.3-5.10) I find it interesting that groups of people believe different things and live their daily lives in different ways. |
| <i>Crossing Bok Chitto</i> | Bok Chitto is a river that has separated plantation owners | JU.3-5.14 (JU.K-2.14) |

from the indigenous Choctaw peoples for years. The law declared that any enslaved person who crosses Bok Chitto is deemed free. When a young girl finds herself crossing the Bok Chitto to get berries for her mother, she encounters slaves escaping the plantation on the other side. This story of friendship and generosity is one that will inspire deep discussion about power, strength, and fighting for others.

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|--------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <i>Sky Sisters</i> | Two Ojibway sisters trek through | ID.3-5.5 (ID.K-2.5) |
| By Jan Bourdeau | the cold north to find the | I know my family and I |
| Waboose | SkySpirit's midnight dance, the | do things the same as |
| | Northern Lights. The younger | and different from |
| | sister has a hard time being | other people and |
| | patient in the cold, while her | groups, and I know how |
| | older sister leads the way on | to use what I learn from |
| | their long journey. The sibling | home, school and other |
| | relationship Bourdeau Waboose | |

| | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------|
| | portrays reminds readers that | places that matter to |
| | the most intimate traditions are | me. |
| | those we share with people we | |
| | love. | |
| <i>The Good Rainbow</i> | In the village of Haapaahnitse at | DI.3-5.9 (DI.K-2.9) |
| <i>Road</i> | the foot of a mountain, two | I feel connected to |
| By Simon J. Ortiz | courageous boys find themselves | other people and know |
| | called to an important mission. | how to talk, work and |
| | Tsaiyah-dzehshi and Hamahshu- | play with others even |
| | dzehshi set west to the home of | when we are different |
| | the Shiwana to ask the Rain and | or when we disagree. |
| | Snow spirits to bring water to | |
| | their barren village. The | |
| | brother's journey will take them | |
| | across mountains and canyons of | |
| | lava to eventually save their | |
| | village. | |
| <i>Sweetest Kulu</i> | An Inuit mother tells her child of | DI.K-2.7 (DI.3-5.7) |
| By Celina Kalluk | the wonders of his birth and the | I can describe some |
| | impact his life has had on their | ways that I am similar |
| | Inuit community. Visitors | to and different from |
| | included animals, tribe members, | people who share my |
| | and arctic weather. Each of these | identities and those |

visitors and animal friends who have other
 brought him a message of identities.
 kindness or word of advice as he
 entered the world. This colorful
 story shows the Inuit values of
 love and respect to each member
 of the community.

We Are Grateful:
Otsaliheliga
 By Traci Sorell

The Cherokee community says DI.K-2.6 (DI.3-5.6)
 “Otsaliheliga” to give thanks for I like being around
 all the changes they experience people who are like me
 in life. This story walks the and different from me,
 reader through a variety of and I can be friendly to
 changes the community everyone.
 experiences, from a Cherokee
 New Year, to the loss of loved
 ones, the Cherokee community
 finds ways to say “Otsaliheliga” in
 all seasons.

Bowwow Powwow
 By Brenda J. Child

When Windy Girl and her dog, ID.K-2.3 (ID.3-5.3)
 Itchy Boy, attend their first
 powwow with her uncle, the I know that all my
 jingle dresses, tasty food, and group identities are
 native songs amaze them. part of me – but that I
 am always ALL me.

Feeling at home, Windy Girl lets her imagination run wild and begins to envision a powwow for dogs. This playful tale speaks to the power of powwow and reminds readers that native peoples bring their own experience to their cultural practice.

Table 3

Children's Books featuring Asian Characters

| Book Title | Description | ABF Standards |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| <i>A Different Pond</i> By Bao Phi | A Vietnamese boy and his father fish for dinner in America and reflect on the family's move from Vietnam. The fishing trip they embark on now is reminiscent for his father of his homeland, while the son questions his father's actions. Why can't his dad afford food if | JU.3-5.14 (JU.K-2.14) I know that life is easier for some people and harder for others based on who they are and where they were born. |

he has a job he works at every day? Readers explore immigration and cultural preservation in an unforgettable, award-winning story.

Dim Sum for Everyone
By Grace Lin

This easy-reader book focuses on one of the oldest Chinese dining traditions. Dim Sum trolleys roll prepared food to each table and each family member gets to choose their favorites to share with the table. Pictures and labels of classic Dim Sum offerings make this an interactive book students will love connecting to!

DI.K-2.8 (DI.3-5.8)
I want to know about other people and how our lives and experiences are the same and different.

Dear Juno
By Suyung Pak

Juno's grandmother writes letters to him in Korean, but Juno doesn't know how to speak or read Korean. When he can't disturb his parents to read the letter for him, Juno decides to

ID.K-2.3 (ID.3-5.3)
I know that all my group identities are part of me – but that I am always ALL me.

draw a response to his
grandmother. Their
communication shows that
many ideas are universal and
the power of family language in
bringing us together.

| | | |
|---------------------|--|---|
| <i>The Name Jar</i> | Unhei's Korean grandmother | AC.K-2.16 (AC.3-5.16) |
| By Yangsook Choi | gives her, which used to feel special, but as new kids at school struggle to pronounce her name and teasing starts, Unhei wishes she had a name that sounded like everyone else's. Unhei debates choosing a new American name, like she has seen others do. As Unhei's classmates try to help her choose an American name, Unhei realizes that what makes her different also makes her special. | I care about those who are treated unfairly. |

| | | |
|--------------------------|--|---------------------|
| <i>Cora Cooks Pancit</i> | Cora gets to be her mother's assistant in the kitchen today | ID.K-2.5 (ID.3-5.5) |
|--------------------------|--|---------------------|

By Dorina K. Lazo Gilmore making her favorite Filipino dish, pancit. Cora usually gets stuck with the kid jobs, while she watches her older siblings get the adult jobs. When her siblings leave the house for a day, Cora jumps on the opportunity to cook with her mom, and this time, she will get to do the adult jobs. Cora and her mother exchange stories of tradition, immigration, and cooking as they make pancit together.

King for a Day
By Rukhsana Khan The Pakistani spring festival, Basant, has come and it's the most exciting day of the year. Malik cannot wait to set his special kite, Falcon, free for Basant, but his wheelchair draws the attention of a bully who is competing kites with Malik. Read to find out if

JU.3-5.12 (JU.K-2.12)
I know when people are treated unfairly, and I can give examples of prejudice words, pictures and rules.

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| | Malik's kite will remain superior; will he become king for a day? | |
| <i>Uncle Peter's Amazing Chinese Wedding</i> By Lenore Look | Everyone is excited for Uncle Peter's wedding except Jenny. While the family is busy preparing for a traditional Chinese wedding full of good- luck money, multiple dresses for the bride, and the official tea ceremony, Jenny is worried she won't be Uncle Peter's number one girl anymore. In a mischievous series of events, Jenny does everything she can to stop this wedding from happening. | DI.K-2.9 (DI.3-5.9) I know everyone has feelings, and I want to get along with people who are similar to and different from me. |
| <i>Hana Hashimoto, Sixth Violin</i> By Chieri Uegaki | After three lessons, Hana Hashimoto has signed up to play her violin for the school talent show. Her brothers have little confidence in her, teasing her for her lack of talent. As doubt | ID.3-5.1 (ID.K-2.1) I know and like who I am and can talk about my family and myself and describe our various group identities. |

starts to creep into Hana’s mind,
 she remembers her talented
 grandfather, or Ojichan, and
 how beautifully he played when
 she visited him in Japan. She is
 determined to practice every
 day, just as he did. This story of
 perseverance is an inspiration
 to kids setting goals anywhere
 in the world.

Table 4

Children’s Books featuring South and Central American Characters

| Book Title | Description | ABF Standards |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| <i>Alma and How She Got Her Name</i> | Alma Sofia Esperanza José Pura Candela is curious about why her name is so long. This touching story reveals the history of each part of Alma’s name, from her great- grandmother Esperanza who loved to travel, to her | JU.K-2.11 (JU.3-5.11) I know my friends have many identities, but they are always still just themselves. |

grandfather Jose, an artist.

Alma realizes that while her name may be longer than everyone else's, she too will one day have a story to pass on.

My Papi Has a

Daisy Ramona likes to ride with

ID.3-5.6 (DI.K-2.6)

Motorcycle

her Papi on his motorcycle

I like knowing people

By Isable Quintero

around Los Angeles. As they

who are like me and

ride around town together,

different from me, and I

Daisy and her Papi notice how

treat each person with

the community around them

respect.

has changed. The colorful

language lends itself well to

teaching inferences and with

Spanish phrases thrown in, this

book gives our Spanish-

speaking students a chance to

teach their peers common

phrases and words.

Islandborn

In Lola's classroom, everyone is

ID.K-2.3 (ID.3-5.3)

By Junot Diaz

from a different country. When

I know that all my group

asked to draw a picture of the

identities are part of me

place where they came from,

Lola is left wondering about the – but that I am always
island she came from. In an ALL me.
effort to learn more about the
Dominican Republic, Lola
begins asking all her family
members and neighbors about
the island. She is shocked to
find that many community
members describe it as
beautiful, yet none of them want
to move back. Why did they
come to America? Why can't
Lola remember her roots?

*Carmela Full of
Wishes*

By Matt de la Pena

Carmela is finally old enough to ID.3-5.5 (ID.K-2.5)
go with her brother on her I know my family and I
scooter to help him run errands do things the same as
for the family. As they zoom and different from other
around town together, Carmela people and groups, and I
and her brother arrive at the know how to use what I
Laundromat to wash the learn from home, school
family's clothing. Carmela picks and other places that
a dandelion and struggles to matter to me.
think of the perfect wish. Torn

between wishes for her mother
to get a day off work, for her
dad to get his papers to join the
family, for her brother to get a
new shiny bike, Carmela
realizes that all of these wishes
are important.

| | | |
|--------------------------|---|---|
| <i>Along the Tapajos</i> | Caua and Inae use boats every | DI.3-5.9 (DI.K-2.9) |
| By Fernando Vilela | day to travel along the Tapajos River in Brazil. But when the rainy season comes and the water rises, they must relocate to safer, higher ground. All is well until Caua and Inae realize they left behind Titi, their pet tortoise! Tortises cannot swim like turtles, and the siblings realize they must make difficult decisions that could impact everyone's safety. | I feel connected to other people and know how to talk, work and play with others even when we are different or when we disagree. |
| <i>The Field</i> | In St. Lucia, futbol is the sport | ID.K-2.2 (ID.3-5.2) |
| By Baptiste Paul | that brings the community together. This colorful story | I can talk about interesting and healthy |

begins with a simple call, “Vin!” ways that some people
to unite all the soccer playing who share my group
kids in the community. Friends identities live their lives.
play against friends and the
whole community comes to
cheer them on, but a tropical
storm rolling in may threaten
their game altogether. This
creole story uses soccer to teach
about teamwork, acceptance,
and leadership.

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|--|---|--|
| <i>Dear Primo: A Letter to my Cousin</i> | Two cousins, Charlie and Carlitos, write letters back and forth from America and Mexico. | DI.K-2.7 (DI.3-5.7) I can describe some |
| By Duncan Tonatiuh | The boys trade stories of what they see out their windows, how they get to school, and what they like to play. As the boys compare their lives, it invites the reader to engage in conversations about how one family can have such different life experiences. | ways that I am similar to and different from people who share my identities and those who have other identities. |

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|---|---|--|
| <i>Mango, Abuela, and Me</i> By Meg Medina | Abuela comes from Cuba to stay with Mia and her family, but Mia soon realizes communicating might be harder than she originally thought. Mia becomes frustrated that they aren't able to say everything they want to each other. Abuela learns English from Mia, and Mia learns Spanish from her Abuela. As Mia learns more about where her family comes from, she and Abuela embark on a learning adventure that will change both of them forever. | DI.3-5.8 (DI.K-2.8) I want to know more about other people's lives and experiences, and I know how to ask questions respectfully and listen carefully and non-judgmentally. |
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Discussion

Students flourish and grow as readers when given opportunities to connect with texts (Tschida, Ryan, & Ticknor, 2014). When teachers utilize books featuring characters from different races, cultures, experiences, and lifestyles, they are guiding students towards greater self-understanding and identity development. This identity development not only builds empathy in students, but also increases students' interest in reading (Hughes-Hassell, Barkley, & Koehler, 2009). Motivation

is one of the greatest indicators of reading success, which has a deep connection to career success, making this strategy not only inclusive, but equitable (Marinak & Gambrell, 2017; (Jones, Barnes, Bailey, & Doolittle, 2017).

Tables 1-4 provide a starting point for teachers to utilize this process. Teachers should start supplementing their classroom libraries with original-voice texts that feature a wide array of characters. Teachers should model connecting and contrasting personal experiences of their own with books they read aloud. The Anti-Bias Framework standards aligned with each book provide teachers a direction to guide conversation around each text. These conversations will help illuminate which books are mirrors and windows for each student and will ultimately shed light on each student's self-image and identity. Elementary literacy coaches should be adapting their curriculum to utilize more diverse texts to reflect not only their students, but also peoples not present in the classroom. Curriculum adjustment is not to be feared; fidelity to the standards and learning objectives is what is important, not necessarily fidelity to the text suggested by the curriculum.

Students have a right to see themselves in their texts and current literature is far too homogeneous. This is not only harmful for students whose identities are absent, but also for the white students who are gathering an overinflated sense of importance. Mirrors and windows enable teachers to be a catalyst for change in equity, social development, and stability not only for their students year to year, but also for communities over time.

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