

CULTURALLY DIVERSE LITERATURE

Enriching Variety in an Era of Common Core State Standards

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Why is it important for all teachers—from pre-K through the university level—to integrate culturally diverse literature in their teaching? Why do all readers need a rich and varied diet of books that reflect the many different ethnic, cultural, socioeconomic, and linguistic groups that make up multiple voices, individual lives, social attributes, and perspectives around the world? MacArthur Award-winning Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Adichie partially answers these questions when she explains “the danger of the single story.” In her 2009 lecture (www.ted.com/talks/lang/en/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story.html), Adichie tells us that she grew up on a university campus in eastern Nigeria and started reading British and American children’s books around the age of 4. With pencils and crayons in hand, Adichie began writing her own stories around the age of 7, where her characters reflected the exact traits and cultures of the characters that she was reading. She tells us that her characters “were white and blue-eyed, played in the snow, ate apples, and talked a lot about the weather.” Adichie lived in Nigeria and, at the time, had never been outside of her home country. There was no snow in Nigeria, people ate mangoes, and they never talked about the weather because, as she asserts, “there was no need to.” Her characters also drank a lot of ginger beer because that’s what the characters drank in the British books she read, “...never mind that I had no idea what ginger beer was,” she says. After briefly summarizing her experiences as a young reader and writer, Adichie concludes by stating that we’re all made impressionable and vulnerable by the stories we read,

especially (italics added for emphasis) young children. Because Adichie had only read books with characters foreign to Nigeria, she was convinced that characters in her own stories had to be from places other than her home country, and the context of the stories had to be about things with which she could not personally identify, because that was all that she read. After discovering books with African characters, written by authors from African nations, fortunately Adichie went through a “mental shift” in her perceptions of literature. She states, “I realized that people like me, girls with skin the color of chocolate whose kinky hair could not form ponytails, could also exist in literature.” This discovery was a new beginning for Adichie, leading her to write about ideas she could relate to and had experienced. She also makes the point that just reading one book about *any* particular culture or group of people is also very dangerous. No group or individual has a single story, and knowing only one story leads to the creation of assumptions and stereotypes.

Adichie’s story of the books she read as a young child and how they influenced the stories she wrote resonates with many scholars’ perceptions and experiences with story characters. Like Adichie, Au (2011)

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also grew up with books that did not reflect who she is. “As a student, I do not remember thinking it odd never to come across a book written by an Asian American or with Asian American characters or, for that matter, with any but European American characters. I assumed that books were supposed to represent another world, not anything close to my own experience, since that was the case with all the books I had ever read” (pp. 16–17). Adichie’s and Au’s experiences growing up as young readers and writers convey that students shape their view of the world and of themselves partly through the books they read. Scholars and researchers such as Rosenblatt (1938/1995) also attest to this notion.

Almost 50 years ago, poet and critic Nancy Larrick wrote an article titled “The All-White World of Children’s Books,” in which she argues that all children need to see themselves and others in the books they read. Larrick insisted that if children never see themselves in books, they receive the subtle messages that they are not important enough to appear in books and that books are not for them. Conversely, if children see *only* themselves in the books they read, they come to the conclusion that those who are different from them are not worthy of appearing in books.

This idea is central to the notion of books as mirrors and windows (Bishop, 1990; Galda, 1998; Glazier & Seo, 2005), a metaphor that many of those who write about books refer to in discussions about the literary diet of young readers. A more nuanced take on that metaphor is to think of a window at twilight. As one gazes out of the window, it is possible to see another world. If one looks long and carefully enough, when the sun sinks and the sky darkens, one will begin to see oneself reflected in that window on the world (Galda, Sipe, Liang, &

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Cullinan, 2013). The point emphasized here is significant; it is important to not just *see* self and others but to *recognize* oneself *in* others, to understand our common humanity (Galda et al., 2013). As Rosenblatt (1938/1995) argued so many years ago, this understanding is fundamental to achieving the goal of an equitable, peaceful society. And with careful selection of excellent books for children and young adults, teachers and teacher educators can prepare students for creating and maintaining a better world. Our point is that teaching—and especially teaching with literature—is political. The books that we offer children will affect them and their worlds.

Culturally Diverse Literature

What do we mean by culturally diverse literature? As a social construct, diversity is complex, complicated, multidimensional, and fluid. In terms of literature, themes centered on race, ethnicity, culture, and languages are commonly considered important characteristics of diversity. Hermann-Wilmarth (2007) and other scholars advocate for expanding the borders of culturally diverse literature beyond race, ethnicity, and language to aspects such as physical and mental disabilities, socioeconomic status, language variations, dialect differences, and religion. Various family structures, such as foster families, and sexual and gender identity are also culturally diverse characteristics included in literature. All of these characteristics

are not separate from race, ethnicity, culture, and language; rather, they are intertwined. As stated by Boyd (2003), “Multicultural literature in the overall English language arts curriculum... is a long overdue and positive change to the study of literature that offers teachers and students a more realistic reflection of society, history, education, and schools in the United States” (p. 461).

What we choose to include in our curricula depends on the students we teach and the curricula we need to enact. Certainly, as we are thoughtful in selecting choices about any literature we add to the curriculum, we also must be thoughtful in considering students and their communities, striving not to avoid differences of opinion

Pause and Ponder

- When I select literature, what criteria am I using? How am I including culturally diverse literature in my classroom?
- What do I need to know and learn about *all* of my students in order to select and evaluate relevant and appropriate high-quality, culturally diverse literature?
- What informed decisions about culturally diverse literature do I need to make in order to help my students meet the Common Core State Standards for reading literature?

but rather to include them in classroom discussions of the literature we read. Smolkin and Young (2011) argue that “[w]e know it is difficult to move past long held personal positions to represent society fully, but for children’s sakes, we must work to do so. In the end, we must support our preservice teachers’ preparation for working with *all* children by bringing high-quality, diverse children’s books into our classrooms and fostering thoughtful, inclusive discussions” (p. 224). The implementation of culturally diverse literature in the classroom only occurs when teachers are willing to make change happen.

Availability of Culturally Diverse Literature

The state of literature for young readers in terms of cultural diversity today has both pros and cons. One con is that—although gains have been made—there are *still* not enough books being published that are outside of the white, middle-class, heterosexual world. To educate all children appropriately, teachers need more books that depict diverse lifestyles, opportunities, beliefs, choices, and worldviews in addition to books that focus on the status quo. Today, as in the past, the number of books by and about people in what Virginia Hamilton called “parallel cultures” does not even begin to reflect the census figures for the United States; it gets even worse when we look at global literature. Today, about 80% of teachers are still female, white (Goldring, Gray, & Bitterman, 2013), and middle-class. The 2010 census data reveals that 12.6% of the U.S. population identifies as black or African American, 0.9% American Indian and Alaska Native, 4.8% Asian, 0.2% Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander, 6.2% “some other race,” and 2.9% biracial, with the Hispanic or Latino/

Latina population of any race comprising 16.3%. Seventy-two percent of the respondents identify as white.

Book publishing statistics have not changed much in the past 30 years, with less than 5% of books published being by or about parallel cultures. These percentages only pertain to race. There are even fewer books that depict characters with exceptionalities like disability, LGBTQ characters, various religious beliefs, and regional cultures such as rural. The Cooperative Children’s Book Center (CCBC) reports on the state of the literature each year. In 2013, CCBC received approximately 3,200 books. Of those:

- 93 books had significant African or African American content
- 67 books were by black authors and/or illustrators
- 34 books had American Indian themes, topics, or characters
- 18 books were by American Indian authors and/or illustrators
- 61 books had significant Asian/Pacific or Asian/Pacific American content
- 88 books were by authors and/or illustrators of Asian/Pacific heritage
- 57 books had significant Latino/Latina content
- 48 books were by Latino/Latina authors and/or illustrators

Although the CCBC report causes one to pause, the good news is that, over time, we have been given a number of magnificent books by authors and illustrators who have created literature that gives children who are not white and middle-class books that “offer them affirmation, visibility, and insight into the world in which they live” (Horning, Lindgren, & Schliesman, 2014). For children who are white, these books offer different perspectives from their world.

Due to the passage of time, teachers now have a significant amount of quality children’s and young adult multicultural literature from which to choose to develop a rich and varied collection for their classroom and school libraries.

But, when we look at the text exemplars presented in Appendix B of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS; National Governors Association Center for Best Practices [NGA Center] & Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 2010), with respect to a wide variety of culturally diverse literature, the choices are just as limited as reported by the CCBC. In fact, in Appendix B overall, more literature from the canon is recommended and far less modern, contemporary, diverse literature selections. If we look at the suggestions for grades 4–5, 10 stories, 8 poems, and 13 informational texts are presented as examples for teachers to use in their classrooms to support Standards implementation. Of those:

- 5 books had significant African American content
- 3 authors are African American
- 1 author is Guyanese
- 2 books had significant American Indian content
- 1 author is Native American
- 1 book had significant Asian/Pacific Islander content

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“When choosing culturally diverse literature to teach students to meet the CCSS, for instructional support, it is imperative that teachers consult multiple and varied sources.”

- 1 author is Asian/Pacific Island American
- 1 book had significant Latino/Latina content
- 2 authors are Latino/Latina

The positive side of this snapshot is that the text exemplars in Appendix B recommend culturally diverse authors' work for fourth- and fifth-grade students. And although the evidence suggests that we need many more culturally diverse stories, poems, and informational selections from which to choose among the exemplars, the ones that we present in our example here and as reported by the CCBC are of the highest quality. The converse is that many more diverse examples need to be included in Appendix B. Therefore, when choosing culturally diverse literature to teach students to meet the CCSS, for instructional support, it is imperative that teachers consult multiple and varied resources.

Selecting Culturally Diverse Literature

Teachers might ask, “How should I select culturally diverse literature for my students? Where should I begin?” We offer several suggestions: (a) study the work of authors and illustrators to determine the quality of culturally rich books, including style, topics, themes, and perspectives; (b) draw from award categories of non-white cultural groups as well as various resources; and (c) learn to determine the authenticity of authors' work. We explain in the following sections.

In Table 1, we present a list of authors and illustrators of culturally diverse literature (Galda, Sipe, Liang, & Cullinan, 2013). The list is not exhaustive; it is intended to be a starting point and a resource for teachers seeking to enhance the text exemplars of Appendix B of the CCSS (NGA Center & CCSSO, 2010). Galda et al. (2013) argue that literature for readers should be culturally rich and of excellent literary quality. While there are qualities that mark excellent literature, when we also consider readers, the notion of what is a “good” quality book varies according to a reader's needs and experiences. Our cultural values and practices also complicate the notion of the quality and features of a good book (Stevenson, 2006). Keeping in mind that opinions about quality can vary, there are respected texts (Galda et al., 2013; Kiefer & Tyson, 2013) that represent authoritative perspectives on universal aspects of excellent books.

Awards and Resources. Criteria for excellence span different genres (e.g., fantasy and science fiction, poetry, contemporary realistic fiction, nonfiction and biography, folklore, historical fiction) and formats (e.g., picture books, readers, early chapter books, novels) in which literature for young people exists. Determining excellence in various genres is the topic of most comprehensive textbooks on children's literature (Kiefer & Tyson, 2013; Galda et al., 2013). Further, there are many awards that nominate books as examples of excellence. The

most well-known are the Caldecott and the Newbery Awards, administered by the American Library Association (ALA). While excellent books that reflect diversity can certainly be found among the ranks of the Newbery and Caldecott winners and honor books, there are many other books that express diversity while also being outstanding in literary quality.

Awards other than the Newbery and Caldecott have been expressly created to praise books for their depiction of non-white cultural groups. Including books from the following award categories is key to any classroom and school library collection:

- The Coretta Scott King Award and Honor recognizes authors and illustrators whose work portrays well the experiences of African Americans.
- The Pura Belpré Award is given to books that celebrate the Latino cultural experience; the Américas Book Award recognizes books for their portrayal of Latin America, the Caribbean, or Latinos in the United States.
- The Tomás Rivera Mexican American Children's Book Award honors good books about the lives of Mexican Americans.
- The American Indian Youth Literature Award is given for the best writing and illustrations by and about American Indians.
- The Asian Pacific American Award for Literature was created for

“Criteria for excellence span different genres and formats in literature for young people.”

Table 1 Authors and Illustrators of Culturally Diverse Literature

Authors		Illustrators	
African American		African American	
Maya Angelou	Frederick McKissack	Ashley Bryan	Kadir Nelson
Tanya Bolden	Patricia McKissack	R. Gregory Christie	Brian Pinkney
Gwendolyn Brooks	Walter Dean Myers	Bryan Collier	Jerry Pinkney
Lucille Clifton	Marilyn Nelson	Floyd Cooper	Sean Qualls
Christopher Paul Curtis	Vaunda Micheaux Nelson	Donald Crews	James Ransome
Tanita S. Davis	Angela Davis Pinkney	Leo Dillon	Synthia Saint James
Sharon Draper	Connie Porter	Tom Feelings	Charles R. Smith
Ernest J. Gaines	Lesa Cline-Ransome	E.B. Lewis	Javaka Steptoe
Sundee T. Frazier	Jewell Parker Rhodes	Christopher Myers	
Nikki Giovanni	Faith Ringgold		
Eloise Greenfield	Margaree King Smith		
Nikki Grimes	Mildred D. Taylor		
Virginia Hamilton	Carole Boston Weatherford		
Angela Johnson	Rita Williams-Garcia		
Julius Lester	Jacqueline Woodson		
Latino/Latina		Latino/Latina	
Alma Flor Ada	Meg Medina	George Ancona	Susan Guevara
Francisco X. Alarcón	Nicholasa Mohr	Robert Casilla	Rafael Lopez
Julia Alvarez	Patricia Mora	Joe Cepeda	Yuyi Morales
George Ancona	Nancy Osa	Raul Colon	Sara Palacios
Anilú Bernardo	Pam Muñoz Ryan	David Diaz	Enrique O. Sanchez
Carmen T. Bernier-Grand	Gary Soto	Lulu Delacre	Duncan Tonatiuh
Diane Gonzales Bertrand	Ana Veciana-Suarez	Enrique Flores-Galbes	Eric Velasquez
Sandra Cisneros	Lenore Look	Carmen Lomas Garza	
Carmen Agra Deedy	Adeline Yen Mah		
Margarita Engle	Ken Mochizuki		
Julia Ortiz Cofer	An Na		
Ina Cumpiano	Lensey Namioka		
Francisco Jimenez			
Victor Martinez			
Guadalupe Garcia McCall			
Asian and Pacific Island American		Asian and Pacific Island American	
Debjani Chatterjee	Thanhha Lei	Yan Nascimbene	
Sook Nyul Choi	Grace Lin	Allen Say	
Ying Chang Compestine	Linda Sue Park	Ed Young	
Demi	Yoshiko Uchida		
Chen Jiang Hong	Janet Wong		
Ji-Li Jiang	Lisa Yee		
Cynthia Kadhota	Wong Herbert Yee		
Marie Lee	Laurence Yep		
	Ed Young		
Native American		Native American	
Sherman Alexie		Shonto Begay	
Joseph Bruchac		Christopher Canyon	
Michael Dorris		Murv Jacob	
Louise Erdrich		George Littlechild	
Cynthia Leitich Smith		Leo Yerma	
Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve			
Gayle Ross			
Arab American			
Randa Abdel-Fattah	Naomi Shihab Nye		
Ibtisam Barakat	Marjane Satrapi		
Hena Khan			

outstanding books in this cultural group.

- The Arab American Book Award is presented for books that preserve and advance the understanding, knowledge, and resources of the Arab American community and is given to one children's and one young adult title annually.
- The Schneider Family Book Award is given to a book that embodies an artistic expression of the disability experience for children and adolescent audiences.
- The Batchelder Award is for books originally published in countries outside of the United States and translated to English.
- The Stonewall Book Award—Barbara Gittings Literature Award honors books about LGBT identity.

Award-winning books have been considered by experts and judged for cultural authenticity and accuracy, among other determinants of quality. But assessing the quality of children's and young adult literature as teachers who know their own students is crucial. All of the excellence in the world will not matter if the readers are not taken into account, and in classrooms, it is the astute, observant teacher who links excellence and young readers. This takes judicious use of others' expertise and one's own knowledge and resources. Certainly, consult award lists, but also build a cohort of critical friends who know you and your students and can serve as extra eyes to look for stereotyped images, appropriations, or inaccuracies. Just as every excellent book may not further an agenda for diversity, every culturally diverse book may not be excellent. As authors in Fox and Short's (2003) edited volume demonstrate, since viewpoints on cultural authenticity are not consistent even within the same

“Classroom and school libraries should reflect multiple ideologies that parallel diverse student populations.”

cultural groups, there is a great deal of room for argument. Nevertheless, there are three broad categories to which we can look for guidance on how to determine a quality book:

- Visual and verbal sensitivity
- Authenticity and accuracy
- Ideology

There are varied and quality resources that may be beneficial to teachers while making literature selections. In Table 2, we offer some of these resources to assist in developing a culturally inclusive collection of literature. We now turn to our discussion of authenticity.

Authenticity. Visual stereotyping and tokenism can be spotted in books and should be the basis for their removal from any collection. Similarly, a book’s language should also be a feature to address. The line between a dialect and stereotypical speech may not be easily drawn, but this should certainly be considered.

There are a multitude of differing opinions about what makes a book culturally authentic. However, Fox and Short (2003) argue that “the reader’s sense of truth in how a specific cultural experience has been represented within a book, particularly when the reader is an insider to the culture portrayed in that book, is probably the most common

understanding of cultural authenticity” (p. 5); ambiguous though that may seem, a reader’s sense of candor may be just as valid as a gold or silver seal stamped on the cover of a book. With respect to accuracy, Isaacs (2007) summarizes the need for, and sometimes the difficulty of, assessing truth versus misinformation before presenting books

to young readers: “It is important, too, to have the cultural details be right, although just what *is* right is not always easy to determine” (p. 420).

We know that every book contains an ideology and assumptions about how the world operates. Classroom and school libraries should reflect multiple ideologies, since our classrooms are populated

Table 2 Resources to Locate Culturally Diverse Literature

Recommended Texts
Bishop, Rudine Sims, <i>Free Within Ourselves: The Development of African American Children's Literature</i>
Brooks, Wanda, & Jonda McNair, <i>Embracing, Evaluating, and Examining African American Children's and Young Adult Literature</i>
Fox, Dana, & Kathy Short, <i>Stories Matter: The Complexity of Cultural Authenticity in Children's Literature</i>
Harris, Violet, <i>Teaching Multicultural Literature in Grades K–8</i>
———, <i>Using Multiethnic Literature in the K–8 Classroom</i>
Seale, Doris, & Beverly Slapin, <i>A Broken Flute: The Native Experience in Books for Children and Young Adults</i>
Webber, Carlisle, Gay, <i>Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning Teen Literature: A Guide to Reading Interests</i>
Culturally-Specific Book Awards
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coretta Scott King Award and Honor (ALA) • Pura Belpré Award (ALA) • Américas Book Award (Consortium of Latin American Studies Programs) • Tomás Rivera Mexican American Children's Book Award (Texas State Univ.–San Marcos) • American Indian Youth Literature Award (American Indian Library Association) • Asian Pacific American Award for Literature (American Pacific American Librarians Association) • Arab American Book Award (Arab American National Museum) • Carter G. Woodson Book Awards (National Council for the Social Studies) • Stonewall Book Awards (ALA)
Additional Book Awards
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schneider Family Book Award (ALA) • Mildred L. Batchelder Award (ALA)
Additional Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International Children's Digital Library (en.childrenslibrary.org): An Internet resource of bilingual picture books and picture books in languages other than English. • American Indians in Children's Literature (americanindiansinchildrensliterature.net): A blog by Debbie Reese (Nambe Pueblo). Reese provides a wealth of resources for selecting children's literature about American Indians that is culturally authentic, accurate, and free from bias. • Kaleidoscope: A Multicultural Booklist for Grades K–8. NCTE. • Adichie, Chimamanda. “The Danger of a Single Story.” TED Talk, October 2009. [Video filmed in July 2009]. • Teaching Tolerance (www.tolerance.org): A project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, Teaching Tolerance offers lesson plans, bibliographies, and other curriculum materials for teaching respect for and appreciation of diversity. It also offers resources for parents, teens, and children. Use the website's search feature to locate specific types of materials. • Paper Tigers (www.papertigers.org): Sponsored by Pacific Rim Voices, this website provides excellent information on books from and about the Pacific Rim and South Asia. Check out the book reviews, essential reading list, interviews with book creators, and more. • Reading Out (www.readingout.org): A searchable online database for LGBTQ young readers and their allies.

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by young people who are different and who “know differently” in the sense of Gonzales and colleagues’ (2005) writings about the “many ways of being” that shape individuals. In sum, no matter what aspect of diversity a teacher might want to introduce to students through literature, quality criteria for LGBT, disability, religion, region, socioeconomic status, and so forth are the same.

In the next section, we present a hypothetical scenario of *My Man Blue* by Nikki Grimes as an example of choices Mr. Cason, a second-grade teacher, made in selecting an excellent, culturally rich book that is authentic, accurate, and free of stereotypes to help with instruction around two reading literature Standards.

Evaluating Nikki Grimes’ *My Man Blue*

Mr. Cason is a second-grade teacher who works at an urban elementary school in the northeastern U.S. The school’s student population comes from neighboring communities and is approximately 85% black, including refugees from Somalia; 8% Latino/Latina; 3% white; and 5% Asian/Pacific Islander.

While the CCSS include an appendix (2010) to text exemplars, as we explained earlier, the examples are limited as related to modern and contemporary culturally diverse literature. Mr. Cason wants to teach his second graders to meet two of the reading literature CCSS. To teach the children about characters’

point of view, RL.2.6, and author’s craft and structure, RL.2.7, Mr. Cason uses *My Man Blue*. In the story, which is about a nontraditional family and is told through poetry, an African American boy develops a relationship with a father figure in an urban neighborhood. When Damon, the main character, meets Blue, a person in his neighborhood, he is wary at first. Damon feels like Blue is going to encroach on his relationship with his mother, who’s raising Damon by herself.

Being second graders, the children’s knowledge of character’s point of view was emerging. Mr. Cason knew it was critical to purposely select a text where some children could relate to the characters and others could learn about nontraditional family structures; all children would learn about author’s craft and structure. For example, as Mr. Cason examined *My Man Blue* to determine its relevance and appropriateness for his second graders, he used authenticity and the author’s craft as markers of quality. Grimes wove 14 poems together to tell a story about inner-city life—a story which was rooted in her childhood experiences with a “black guardian angel in a leather jacket” (MF 3404, Folder 5). As an African American growing up in the boroughs of New York City, being shuffled from home to home as she was in her formative years, Grimes did not see herself or her home environments reflected in the books she read. While she valued reading other literature and “learning about the world

outside [her] neighborhood,” the books that reflected her reality did not exist, so she created them herself (MF 2449, Folder 1). Likewise, Mr. Cason’s students are in the same demographic of readers who seldom see their home lives reflected back to them through literature. In *My Man Blue*, the ideals that undergird the story are trust, kinship, and collective responsibility, which are all encompassed in the African proverb “It takes a village to raise a child.” Because of how prominently these ideals are featured in the book and because of how the book acts as a rare “mirror” to his students’ urban lives, Mr. Cason is confident that *My Man Blue* meets the criterion of being culturally authentic.

Another indication of quality is the author’s craft. After doing a Google search, Mr. Cason learned that authorities in many circles have lauded Grimes’ poetry for decades. In the year of its publication, *My Man Blue* was designated as a *Newsweek* Best Children’s Book of the Year and a Bank Street College Children’s Book of the Year. It received the Marion Vannett Ridgway Award, and it also made the listings for *Booklist* Editor’s Choice and the *Riverbank Review* Children’s Books of Distinction. The numerous awards that Grimes has received, such as an Award for Excellence in Poetry for Children (National Council of Teachers of English) in 2006, the University of Minnesota’s 2003 Kerlan Award, a Coretta Scott King Author Award in 2002, and four Coretta Scott King Honor Awards, also boost Mr. Cason’s confidence that he was choosing a high-quality, superbly written piece of literature for his students.

In addition to these markers of quality, Mr. Cason recognized how Jerome Lagarrigue’s hazy paintings gently depict Damon and Blue within their natural

setting. He identifies the poem “Damon & Blue” as an example, which reads: “Damon & Blue / Just us two / Cruising up the avenue. / You strut, you glide / But mark our stride / Can’t beat us when we’re / side by side.” “Damon & Blue” appears by itself on the left-hand page upon a backdrop of sea-green acrylic-painted paper. The opposing page shows Damon dressed in a yellow jacket, craning his neck to look at his father figure, tall and stocky with cool shades on. The two hold hands while they stride down the sidewalk past storefronts, and the thick yellow stripe painted in the middle of the street divides the spread in half. Illustrations of the neighborhood are portrayed as a bold, urban landscape with a subdued mood, brushed through with intense, bright colors, symbolizing dreams and aspirations.

Mr. Cason likes the fact that the book features a relationship, which isn’t often seen in children’s literature, and it adds to the book’s relevance. The second opening of the book reveals the first time that Damon met Blue. His mother, a young woman in a summer dress and sandals, keeps a steady hand on Damon’s shoulder while Damon stewes inside. Damon narrates, “My flashing eyes warn ‘Do not trespass here,’ / ‘Cause in this family *I’m* the only man.” Testosterone levels recede as the two get to know each other, but Grimes does not gloss over the genuine feelings of her characters. Mr. Cason believes that

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“Teachers should go beyond the titles and content suggested in Appendix B of the CCSS to enrich the learning possibilities for all students.”

the book is an authentic portrayal of the lives of many children who grow up in homes with no father; he recognizes that this is a fact of several children in his classroom. The characters exemplify real family structures and relationships that young readers do not often encounter.

In sum, Grimes tells the story of Damon and Blue in a free-verse collection of poems. These characters are realistically portrayed and offer readers the opportunity to witness an emerging friendship between two African American males; Damon, who is a boy without a father, and Blue, who lost his own son to the streets. Blue deliberately cultivates a friendship with Damon to fill a void, and likewise, Blue fills a void in Damon’s life. Lagarrigue’s paintings enhance Grimes’ story line, depicting a restricted, uncompromising urban landscape, making this culturally diverse text a compelling and convincing story arc. Given his careful research and analysis, Mr. Cason decided that *My Man Blue* was a high-quality text and an appropriate one that would facilitate discussion and learning among his students. He decided to use this culturally diverse text to give his second graders a piece of literature they could relate to and enjoy in order to meet reading literature Standards RL.2.6 and RL.2.7. In Table 3, we offer examples of culturally diverse literature to use with reading literature Standards 6 and 7 from kindergarten through seventh grade.

Conclusions

Selecting and evaluating high-quality, culturally diverse literature for students is essential, but it is not an exact science. We have discussed the importance of high-quality, diverse literature in classrooms, noting some of the current scholarly literature on this topic, and suggested ways of selecting and evaluating diverse literature. Pushing past the “single story” and the “all-white world of children’s books” is crucial to shaping a broad collection of books that reflect the multiple ways that students can experience the world to find themselves, and others, in the books they read. We have also argued that our understanding of diversity should be expanded to include the voices of different ethnic, cultural, socioeconomic, and linguistic groups as well as additional nonmainstream groups. We believe that a deliberate and sustained effort to enrich classroom and school libraries with culturally diverse literature is vital.

Equally importantly, the inclusion of culturally diverse literature in Appendix B of the CCSS text exemplars is extremely limited (Boyd, 2012/2013). In our example, Mr. Cason selected a culturally diverse text that enabled students to meet the Standards. Like Mr. Cason, it is up to all teachers to go well beyond the titles and content suggested in Appendix B of the CCSS to enrich the teaching and learning possibilities for *all* students, as suggested by the Standards.

Table 3 Culturally Diverse Literature for Reading Literature Standards 6 and 7

Common Core State Standards	
Reading Standards for Literature K–7	
Craft and Structure	
RL.K.6: With prompting and support, name the author and illustrator of a story and define the role of each in telling the story.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate picture books illustrated by James A. Ransome, E.B. Lewis, Bryan Collier, Floyd Cooper, Donald Crews, Ashley Bryan, Jerry Pinkney, Javaka Steptoe, Alan Say, Ed Young, Joe Cepeda, Susan Guevara, and Eric Velasquez
RL.2.6: Acknowledge differences in the points of view of characters, including by speaking in a different voice for each character when reading dialogue aloud.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>My Man Blue</i> by Nikki Grimes
RL.3.6: Distinguish their own point of view from that of the narrator or those of the characters.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Other Side</i> or <i>Coming on Home Soon</i> by Jacqueline Woodson
RL.4.6: Compare and contrast the point of view from which different stories are narrated, including the difference between first- and third-person narrations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Morning Girl</i> by Michael Dorris (This standard can be addressed by any number of picture books or novels, taking care to select them based on point of view.)
RL.5.6: Describe how a narrator's or speaker's point of view influences how events are described.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Guests</i> by Michael Dorris • <i>Year of Impossible Goodbyes</i> by Sook Nyul Choi
RL.6.6: Explain how an author develops the point of view of the narrator or speaker in a text.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>One Crazy Summer</i> by Rita Williams-Garcia • <i>The Friendship or Mississippi Bridge</i> by Mildred D. Taylor
RL.7.6: Analyze how an author develops and contrasts the points of view of different characters or narrators in a text.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry</i> by Mildred D. Taylor • <i>Keesha's House</i> by Helen Frost • <i>Seedfolks</i> by Paul Fleischman
Common Core State Standards	
Reading Standards for Literature K–7	
Integration of Knowledge and Ideas	
RL.K.7: With prompting and support, describe the relationship between illustrations and the story in which they appear (e.g., what moment in a story an illustration depicts).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate picture books illustrated by James A. Ransome, E.B. Lewis, Bryan Collier, Floyd Cooper, Donald Crews, Ashley Bryan, Jerry Pinkney, Javaka Steptoe, Alan Say, Ed Young, Joe Cepeda, Susan Guevara, and Eric Velasquez
RL.1.7: Use illustrations and details in a story to describe its characters, setting, or events.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Grandfather's Journey</i> by Allen Say
RL.2.7: Use information gained from the illustrations and words in a print or digital text to demonstrate understanding of its characters, setting, or plot.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Bat Boy and His Violin</i> by Gavin Curtis
RL.3.7: Explain how specific aspects of a text's illustrations contribute to what is conveyed by the words in a story (e.g., create mood, emphasize aspects of a character or setting).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Little Night</i> by Yuyi Morales • <i>Hot Day on Abbott Avenue</i> by Karen English
RL.4.7: Make connections between the text of a story or drama and a visual or oral presentation of the text, identifying where each version reflects specific descriptions and directions in the text.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>March On! The Day My Brother Martin Changed the World</i> by Christine King Farris and the Carnegie Medal-winning video of the same title produced by Paul Gagne and Melissa Reilly, Weston Woods. (Note: For Standard 7 in grades 5 and up, use the ALA's media award lists to determine outstanding media presentation of outstanding diverse literature.)
RL.6.7: Compare and contrast the experience of reading a story, drama, or poem to listening to or viewing an audio, video, or live version of the text, including contrasting what they "see" and "hear" when reading the text to what they perceive when they listen or watch.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963</i> by Christopher Paul Curtis • <i>The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963</i> movie, directed by Kenny Leon
RL.7.7: Compare and contrast a written story, drama, or poem to its audio, filmed, staged, or multimedia version, analyzing the effects of techniques unique to each medium (e.g., lighting, sound, color, or camera focus and angles in a film).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Warriors Don't Cry</i> by Melba Patillo Beals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Eyes on The Prize</i> (documentary) ○ <i>Crisis at Central High</i> (docudrama) ○ Hazel Bryan and Elizabeth Eckford (photograph) • <i>I Have a Dream Speech</i> by Martin Luther King Jr. (www.youtube.com/watch?v=smEqnnklfYs)

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