Culturally Relevant Literature for English Language Learners

Facilitator: Amy J. Heineke, Ph.D.
COMMUNITY BUILDING ACTIVITY
Responding to a Culturally Relevant Vignette

“My Name”
by Sandra Cisneros
from The House on Mango Street

In English my name means hope. In Spanish it means too many letters. It means sadness, it means waiting. It is like the number nine. A muddy color. It is the Mexican records my father plays on Sunday mornings when he is shaving, songs like sobbing.

It was my great-grandmother’s name and now it is mine. She was a horse woman too, born like me in the Chinese year of the horse – which is supposed to be bad luck if you’re born female—but I think this is a Chinese lie because the Chinese, like the Mexicans, don’t like their women strong.

My great-grandmother. I would’ve liked to have known her, a wild horse of a woman, so wild she wouldn’t marry. Until my great-grandfather threw a sack over her head and carried her off. Just like that, as if she were a fancy chandelier. That’s the way he did it.

And the story goes she never forgave him. She looked out the window her whole life, the way so many women sit their sadness on an elbow. I wonder if she made the best with what she got or was she sorry because she couldn’t be all the things she wanted to be. Esperanza. I have inherited her name, but don’t want to inherit her place by the window.

At school they say my name funny as if the syllables were made out of tin and hurt the roof of your mouth. But in Spanish my name is made out of a softer something, like silver, not quite as thick as sister’s name-Magdalena-which is uglier than mine. Magdalena who at least can come home and become Nenny. But I am always Esperanza.

I would like to baptize myself under a new name, a name more like the real me, the one nobody sees. Esperanza as Lisandra or Maritza or Zeze the X. Yes. Something like Zeze the X will do.
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Connecting to the Culturally Relevant Vignette

Respond and connect to the vignette “My Name.” Use the following questions to guide your thinking about your own name.

- What are your names (e.g., first, middle, last, maiden, married)?

- What are the origins, significances, and/or meanings of your names?

- How were your names chosen for or ascribed to you?

- Are there nicknames or abbreviated versions of your names?

- What feelings do you have toward your names?

- How do you perceive the look, sound, and feel of your names?

- What do your names remind you of?

- Have you had any emotional experiences related to your names?
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Sharing your Personally Relevant Response

From your brainstormed responses and connections to the vignette “My Name,” write four phrases, sentences, or verses to describe your name. These will be shared with others.

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<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Phrase/Sentence/Verse</th>
<th>Partner</th>
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<td>Type of Mediating Text</td>
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<td>Examples/Notes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Windows</td>
<td><em>Windows provide glimpses into the lives of others</em></td>
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<td>Mirrors</td>
<td><em>Mirrors facilitate connections between readers and characters</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sliding glass doors</td>
<td><em>Sliding glass doors invite participation in the story</em></td>
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(Modified from: Bishop, 1990)
# VARIOUS DIMENSIONS OF BILINGUAL STUDENTS’ BIOGRAPHIES

(Modified from: Herrera, 2010)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Biographical Dimension</th>
<th>Description of Dimension</th>
<th>Example/Notes</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sociocultural Dimension</strong>&lt;br/&gt;Home+Community+School Background Knowledge</td>
<td>Consider insights gleaned from conversations and interactions with students, parents, and colleagues (in both academic and non-academic settings about the students’ background knowledge and assets)</td>
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<td><strong>Linguistic Dimension</strong>&lt;br/&gt;Valuing L1 &amp; L2</td>
<td>Consider aspects of comprehension, communication, and expression in both the student’s first and second language and literacy</td>
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<td><strong>Cognitive Dimension</strong>&lt;br/&gt;Implications for Practice</td>
<td>Consider ways the student’s culture might influence how he or she knows, thinks, and applies new learning</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Academic Dimension</strong>&lt;br/&gt;State of Mind</td>
<td>Consider factors related to student’s access to equitable educational opportunities, engagement in instruction, and success in the learning community and in the future</td>
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ANALYZING & SELECTING TEXTS FOR AUTHENTICITY

10 Quick Ways to Analyze Children’s Books for Racism and Sexism

Both in school and out of school, young children are exposed to racist and sexist attitudes. These attitudes expressed repeatedly in books and other media—gradually distort children’s perceptions until stereotypes and myths about minorities and women are accepted as reality. It is difficult for librarians or teachers to convince children to question society’s attitudes; but if children can learn to detect racism and sexism in books, they can transfer that skill to other areas. The following ten guidelines can be used by teachers, librarians, and other educators to evaluate children’s books and to help students detect racism and sexism in the books they read.

1. Check the Illustrations

*Look for stereotypes.* A stereotype, which usually has derogatory implications, is an oversimplified generalization about a particular group, race, or sex. Some infamous (overt) stereotypes of blacks are the happy-go-lucky, watermelon-eating Sambo and the fat, eye-rolling “mammy;” of Chicanos, the sombrero-wearing peon or fiesta-loving, macho bandito; of Asian Americans, the inscrutable, slant-eyed oriental; of American Indians, the naked savage or primitive brave and his squaw; of Puerto Ricans, the switchblade-toting teenage gang member; and of women, the domesticated mother, the demure little girl, or the wicked stepmother. While you may not always find stereotypes in the blatant forms described, look for descriptions, depictions, or labels that tend to demean, stereotype, or patronize characters because of their race or sex.

*Look for tokenism.* If racial minority characters appear in the illustrations, do they look like white people except for being tinted or colored? Do all minorities look stereotypically alike, or are they depicted as individuals with distinctive features?

*Look for active doers.* Do the illustrations depict minorities in subservient and passive roles or in leadership and action roles? Are males the active doers and females the inactive observers?

2. Check the Story Line

Publishers are making an effort not to include adverse reflections or inappropriate portrayals of minority characters in stories; however, racist and sexist attitudes still find expression in less obvious ways. Examples of some subtle (covert) forms of bias include the following:

- **Standard for success:** Does it take “white” behavior standards for a minority person to “get ahead?” Is “making it” in the dominant white society projected as the only ideal? To gain acceptance and approval, do persons of color have to exhibit extraordinary qualities, excel in sports, get A’s, and so forth? In friendships between white and nonwhite children, is it the child of color who does most of the understanding and forgiving?

- **Resolution of problems:** How are problems presented, conceived, and resolved? Are minority people considered to be “the problem?” Are the oppressions faced by minorities and women represented as related to social injustice? Are the reasons for poverty and oppressions explained, or are poverty and oppression accepted as inevitable? Does the story line encourage passive acceptance or active resistance? Is a particular problem faced by a racial minority person or a female resolved through the benevolent intervention of a white person or a male?

- **Role of women:** Are the achievements of girls and women based on their own initiative and intelligence, or are their achievements due to their good looks or relationships with boys? Are sex roles incidental or critical to characterization and plot? Could the same story be told if the sex roles were reversed?
3. Look at the Life-Styles
Are minority persons and their settings depicted in ways that contrast unfavorably with the unstated norm of white middle-class suburbia? If the minority group in question is depicted as “different,” are negative value judgments implied? Are minorities depicted exclusively in ghettos, barrios, or migrant camps? If the illustrations and text depict other cultures, do they go beyond oversimplifications and offer genuine insights into other life-styles? Look for inaccuracies and inappropriateness in the depictions of other cultures. Watch for instances of the “quaint-natives-in-costume” syndrome, which is noticeable in areas such as clothing, customs, behaviors, and personality traits.

4. Weigh the Relationships among People
Do white people in the story possess the power, take the leadership, and make the important decisions? Do racial minorities and females of all races primarily function in supporting roles? How are family relationships depicted? In black families is the mother always dominant? In Hispanic families are there always many children? If the family is separated, are social conditions – unemployment and poverty, for example – cited as reasons for the separation? Are both sexes portrayed in nurturing roles with their families?

5. Note the Heroes
For many years books showed only “safe” minority heroes – those who avoided serious conflict with the white establishment. Today, minority groups insist on the right to define their own heroes (of both sexes) based on their own concepts and struggle for justice. When minority heroes do appear, are they admired for the same qualities that have made white heroes famous or because what they have done have benefited white people? Ask this question: “Whose interest is a particular hero serving?”

6. Consider the Effects on a Child’s Self-Image
Are norms established that limit any child’s aspiration and self-concept? What effect can it have on black children to be continually bombarded with images of the color white as the ultimate in beauty, cleanliness, and virtue and the color black as evil, dirty, and menacing? Does the book counteract or reinforce this positive association with the color white and negative association with the color black? What happens to a girl’s self-image when she reads that boys perform all brave and important deeds? What is the effect on a girl’s self-esteem if she is not fair of skin and slim of body? In a particular story are there one or more persons with whom a minority child can readily and positively identify?

7. Check Out the Author’s Perspective
No author can be entirely objective. All authors write from a cultural as well as personal context. In the past, children’s books were written by members of the middle class. Consequently, a single ethnocentric perspective has dominated children’s literature in the United States. Read carefully any book in question to determine whether the author’s perspective substantially weakens or strengthens the value of his or her written work. Is the perspective patriarchal or feminist? Is it solely Eurocentric, or are minority cultural perspectives respected?

8. Watch for Loaded Words
A word is “loaded” when it has insulting over-tones. Examples of local adjectives (usually racist) are savage, primitive, conniving, lazy, superstitious, treacherous, wily, crafty, inscrutable, docile, and backward. Look for sexist language and adjectives that exclude or ridicule women. Look for use of the male pronoun to refer to both males and females. While the generic use of the word man was
accepted in the past, its use today is outmoded. The following examples illustrate how sexist language can be avoided: substitute the word ancestors for forefathers; chairperson for chairman; community for brotherhood; firefighters for firemen; manufactured for manmade, and the human family for the family of man.

9. Look at the Copyright Date
With rare exceptions nonsexist books were not published before 1973. However, in the early 1970s children’s books began to reflect the realities of a multiracial society. This new direction resulted from the emergence of minority authors who wrote about their own experiences. Unfortunately, this trend was reversed in the late 1970s, and publishers cut back on such books.

Therefore, although the copyright date can be a clue as to how likely the book is to be overtly racist or sexist, a recent copyright date is no guarantee of a book’s relevance or sensitivity. The copyright date indicates only the year the book was published. It usually takes about two years from the time a manuscript is submitted to the publisher to the time it is printed. This time lag meant little in the past; but today, publishers attempt to publish relevant children's books, and this time lag is significant.

10. Consider Literacy, Historical, and Cultural Perspectives
Classical or contemporary literature, including folktales and stories having a particular historical or cultural perspective, should be judged in the context of high-quality literary works. In many cases it may be inappropriate to evaluate classical or contemporary literature according to the guidelines contained in this brochure. However, when analyzing such literary works, remember that although a particular attitude toward women or a minority group was prevalent during a certain period in history, that attitude is in the process of changing.

Adapted from the original brochure, which was published by the Council on Interracial Books for Children by the CALIFORNIA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

11. Look at how language is used among and between characters
**INTERACTIVE READ ALOUDS WITH CULTURALLY RELEVANT TEXTS**

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<th>Title ___________________________</th>
<th>Genre ________________</th>
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**Goals for Reading:** What do you want students to know and do within, beyond, and about the text?

**Before Reading:** Activate prior knowledge, Build background, Concentrate on vocabulary, Describe strategies that will be used, Explain why strategies will support reading comprehension

**During Reading:** Stop to model/demonstrate your thinking, Prompt students to use strategies, Engage students in discussion (Note page numbers, as well as scripted modeling and/or prompting.)

**After Reading:** Discussion, Record of thinking and reading, Self-evaluation

**Extension:** Written, artistic, or dramatic response to support reading comprehension

(For use with read aloud and extension ideas from: Ada, 2003)
LITERATURE CIRCLES WITH CULTURALLY RELEVANT TEXTS

This is a collection of procedures to support discussion in Literature Circles. For further information see: http://www.lauracandler.com/strategies/litcircles.php

ROLES
Each person in the group selects a role for the literature circle discussion. Roles should be selected in advance of reading, as each participant will read the designated chapters or sections of the text with the lens of that specific role. Roles and tasks might include:

- Discussion Director: Write down questions for your group to talk about.
- Connector: Find connections between the text and the outside world.
- Character Captain: Share observations and traits about the main characters.
- Vocabulary Enricher: Look for important, unfamiliar or interesting vocabulary words.
- Literary Luminary: Read aloud powerful or puzzling parts of the text to discuss.
- Artistic Adventurer: Share a representation of the text via art, music, poetry, etc.

For the roles above, more detailed directions for each role are available by request.

TALKING STICKS
Choose a discussion leader. This person needs to get a cup with five talking sticks for each person. Pass out the sticks when you form your circle. Everyone will use them to signal that they want to speak, placing one in the cup when they begin talking. You can use this procedure in addition to another strategy or procedure, as this aims to ensure that everyone participates equally in the discussion.

PROMPTS
Use various prompts to start the dialogue in the literature circles. While these prompts do not need to be determined in advance, it is helpful for students to know the general prompts that might be used so that they can look for sections of interest while reading. Broad prompts that are applicable across texts are: Respond to a part of the book that...

- Makes you laugh
- Makes you wonder
- Surprises you
- You don’t understand
- Has interesting words
- Reminds you of another book
- Reminds you of something has happened in your life
- Makes you sad or upset
- Was your favorite part

Students should be reminded to cite the page number of the text or use a post-it to flag the section of the text to share with the group.
LITERATURE DISCUSSION STRATEGIES

This is a collection of strategies we have used to support discussions in Literature Circles. For further information see: Creating Classrooms for Authors and Inquirers, Kathy Short and Jerry Harste, Heinemann, 1996.

WEBBING WHAT'S ON MY MIND
After sharing initial responses to a book, the group brainstorms a web of issues, themes, and questions that they could discuss from the book or text set. Using the web, the group decides on the one that is most interesting to begin discussion. They continue their discussions by choosing from other ideas on their web. New ideas are added as they come up in the conversations.

GRAFFITI BOARD
Put a big sheet of paper on the table. Each group member takes a corner of the paper and begins writing and drawing their thoughts about the book in a graffiti fashion. The responses, ideas, comments, sketches, quotes, and connections are not organized in any way. The major focus is on brainstorming. Group members then share their graffiti with each other. The graffiti can then lead to webbing or charting to organize the connections on the graffiti paper.

SAVE THE LAST WORD FOR ME
As you read a book, watch for passages or quotes that catch your attention because they are interesting, powerful, confusing, or contradictory. Note the quote on the front of a 3 x 5 card. On the back of the card, write your response or why you found that particular passage noteworthy. In the group, one person begins by sharing one of their quotes. The group then briefly discusses their response to that quote. When the discussion dies down, the person who chose the quote flips over the card and tells why he/she chose it. That person has the last word and the group then moves on to another person. Younger children can show a page from a picture book and the others in the group then share their responses, letting the child who chose that page have the last word.

SKETCH TO STRETCH
After reading a book, make a sketch (a quick graphic drawing) of what the story meant to you (not an illustration of the story) - your connections to the book. In the group, show your sketch, letting others comment on the meanings they see in the sketch before you share your meaning. Talk about your sketches with each other and discuss the different ideas people have raised in their drawings.

ANOMALIES - HAVE I GOT A QUESTION FOR YOU!
As you read, write down any questions you have or things that surprise you. Once you finish reading, read back over your questions to identify the ones that you are still wondering about. Even if you now have an answer, you may want to keep the question because you are interested in what others think about that question. In the group, discuss the questions and generate new questions or anomalies.

LITERATURE RESPONSE LOGS - HERE'S WHAT I THINK
As you read, stop periodically and write a paragraph or so about what you are thinking in response to the book. In the group, begin by having a person read one of their entries. The ideas are discussed by the group until the conversation dies down and then someone shares another entry. Instead of writing in a log, you can use post-its and put a quick response on the post-it and place it on the page.

MAKING A CONNECTION
As you read, jot down stories or experiences that the book makes you think about. In the group, share your connections and talk about how the connections relate to the book being read. If the group is reading in a text set where everyone has read a different book, look for connections across all of your books.
WRITTEN CONVERSATION
Have a silent conversation by talking on paper. Two people share a piece of paper and a pencil and talk about a book by writing back and forth to each other. No talking is allowed except with young children who often need to read what they have written to each other.

COMPARISON CHARTS - SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES
This strategy is usually used after the group has had a chance to read and discuss a set of books for several days. You each read a book, tell the others about the book, and then begin to talk about various similarities and differences across your books. From these discussions, you develop broad categories that can be used on a comparison chart. The books are written on the side and the categories across the top. Both pictures and words are used in the boxes.

If you have all read the same book, you might decide to do several kinds of comparison charts. One type would be a chart that compares your book to others people in your group have read and see as sharing important similarities. The second is to develop categories that relate to differences of opinion among group members. The group members' names are written on the side and the categories across the top. The boxes are filled in with each person's opinion on that issue.

COMMUNITY LOGS - WHAT'S NEW?
Before you begin reading, take a log and as a group write down a list of everything you already know about the topic or theme of the book. For example, if the book is about pioneer life, brainstorm everything you already know about pioneers. Also make a list of questions and things you want to know more about. As you are reading and come across new ideas or information, answers to questions, or new questions, share them with the group and add them to the community log. The group shares one log and that log is passed on with the book or set of books to the next group. This strategy can also be used by making a web of what you know and want to know and then adding new information and questions to the web in a different color of pen or marker during reading and discussing.

FREE WRITES
After reading the book, set a timer for 5-15 minutes. During that time, write continuously about your thoughts related to the book. If you run out of things to write, you can write "I don't know what to write" until you think of something else. In the group, one person begins by reading all or part of their free write aloud. The group discusses the ideas in that paper and then moves on to the next person. Another way to do the free write is to combine it with the Anomaly strategy. Each person shares their questions and anomalies and then everyone chooses one or two of these to do a free write.

CLONING THE AUTHOR
As you read, write down ten points you see as important on individual cards. In the group, you first discard three cards that no longer seem important. From the seven left, choose the one you see as the central idea and arrange your other six cards around it in terms of how the ideas relate. Share your organization with another person in the group by talking through your reasoning. Mix up your cards and give them to another person in the group and ask that person to organize the cards in a way that makes sense to them.

STORY MAPS
Create a visual map that tells the story of the book. The map can take the form of a large mural in which one picture contains the major story elements of character, theme, setting, and plot or a path which follows the major events of the story.

TIME LINE
Create a timeline to organize the major ideas or events of the story or to connect the story with other events in history. Can also create a timeline that shows the highs and lows in terms of tension and suspense in the story.
### BUILDING CULTURALLY RELEVANT CLASSROOM LIBRARIES

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<tr>
<th><strong>What are your goals for your classroom library? How do you wish to make your classroom library more culturally relevant and authentic for your students?</strong></th>
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<th><strong>What culturally relevant texts will help you reach these goals? What authors, illustrators, and literature awards should you seek out to contribute to the library?</strong></th>
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<th><strong>What are your next steps to reach your goals and seek out these desired texts? Where can you seek out resources in order to make your library list a reality?</strong></th>
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### Other questions to consider:

- Do you have a balance between fiction and non-fiction, specifically due to the new push for use informational text in elementary classroom practice?
- Do you have a balance of genre (e.g., poetry, autobiography)?
- Do you have a balance of windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors so that students may both see themselves and others through literature?
- Do you have a balance of language medium (e.g., Spanish & English bilingual, Spanish only, English only, Spanish & English code mixing)?
- Have you considered the authenticity of the texts with respect to culture, language, gender, and other possible biases and stereotypes?
Culturally Relevant Classroom Library Example

GOALS FOR BUILDING A CULTURALLY RELEVANT CLASSROOM LIBRARY
I have noticed that the culturally relevant texts in my classroom library have prevailing themes: Mexican immigrants, female protagonists, border settings, and stories of immigration. As I want to ensure that I reflect the backgrounds of all of the unique Latino children in my classroom, my goal is to incorporate a wider array of texts to better reflect the diversity within the “Latino” classification. I want to ensure that I include picture books that tell narrative stories of children from a wide variety of countries of origin, immigrant and American-born families, male and female protagonists, and both urban and rural settings across the United States. I also want to ensure balance of picture books written with English medium, English and Spanish bilingual, and authentic English and Spanish mixed narrative. To ensure high-quality texts, I utilize award-winning literature, such as the Pura Belpre, Americas, and Tomas Rivera Book Awards, as well as other well-known insiders.

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF CULTURALLY RELEVANT TEXTS

- Keywords: Bi-racial Latino & Caucasian, Female protagonist
- Text Details: Picture book, English & Spanish mixed narrative
- Summary: A young girl shares her favorite pastimes with her American grandparents on Saturdays and Latino grandparents on Sundays. With an authentic mix and codeswitching between English and Spanish dependent on which grandparents she is discussing, she shows both the similarities and nuances across each side of her loving and diverse family.

- Keywords: El Salvadoran immigrant family, Male protagonist, Urban California setting
- Text Details: Poetry, Picture book, English & Spanish bilingual text
- Summary: A young immigrant from El Salvador to the Mission District of San Francisco, Jorge uses poetry to speak of his pride and memories of El Salvador while he becomes accustomed to the urban life in the United States. The poetry tells a story of his evolving identity as he becomes bilingual and bicultural.

- Keywords: Mexican American family, Male protagonist, Urban Texas setting
- Text Details: Picture book, English & Spanish bilingual text
- Summary: Based on the life of Ricardo Romo, this story outlines how this Mexican American boy pushed back against societal expectations of his time to seek out his dreams and utilize his talents to become an accomplished athlete and scholar.

- **Keywords:** Bi-racial Peruvian & Caucasian family, Female protagonist
- **Text Details:** Picture book, English & Spanish bilingual text
- **Summary:** With red hair and brown skin and liking a host of seemingly mixed matched foods and activities, Marisol McDonald emulates and embraces her bi-racial, Peruvian-Scottish-American background and identity.


- **Keywords:** Bi-racial Central American family, Female protagonist, Guatemala setting
- **Text Details:** Picture book, English text (Available in Spanish)
- **Summary:** This text tells the story of a girl who grew up in Guatemala City, the daughter of Chinese immigrants to this Central American country. Using the nuances of daily life in the family store, including talking Spanish, Chinese and Mayan, this story explores the diversity of families, languages, and backgrounds in Latin American countries.


- **Keywords:** Guatemalan family, Female protagonist, Guatemala setting
- **Text Details:** Picture book, English text
- **Summary:** Set in Guatemala, this text gives a glimpse into the Guatemalan culture, traditions, and background through the nuanced lens of Esperanza and her grandmother who draw on tradition, pride, and identity to make and sell weavings at a local market.


- **Keywords:** Puerto Rican family, Female protagonist, Caribbean setting
- **Text Details:** Picture book, English with Spanish worlds
- **Summary:** Now living in New York city, Rosalba goes on an imaginary journey – flying over the Caribbean island where her grandmother grew up to see the nuances of life at the market, beach, and with family.


- **Keywords:** Central American separated family, Male protagonist, Nicaragua setting
- **Text Details:** Picture book, English text
- **Summary:** This text tells the story of Pedrito, who works hard by shining shoes with the goal of buying a bicycle. When he accidently loses money that was entrusted to him by his family, Pedro must work to replace the money rather than buy his bicycle.


- **Keywords:** Mexican American family, Family focus of short stories, Rural Southwest setting
- **Text Details:** Picture book of short stories, English & Spanish bilingual text
- **Summary:** This text includes a bilingual vignette and canvas on each pair of pages that focuses on a family memory or tradition for this Mexican American family living in the
southwest. Illustrated by her beautiful canvas artwork, Garza tells stories about parties, foods, family members, and more.

- **Keywords:** Puerto Rican immigrant family, Male & female protagonists, Urban New York
- **Text Details:** Picture book, English & Spanish bilingual text
- **Summary:** Recent immigrants from Puerto Rico to New York City, these two children meet Pura Belpre at their school and learn about the joys of reading and books. This historical fiction is based on the life of Pura Belpre and the impact she had on the children of New York City in the early 1900s.

- **Keywords:** Mexican immigrant family, Male protagonist, Rural California setting
- **Text Details:** Picture book, English & Spanish bilingual text
- **Summary:** This text tells the story of Juanito, a Mexican immigrant boy who feels upside down in everything that he does at his new school in the U.S. With the support of one particular teacher, he finds his place and voice through writing, art, and music.

- **Keywords:** Mexican American family, Male protagonist
- **Text Details:** Picture book, English & Spanish bilingual text
- **Summary:** This text tells the story of a Mexican American boy who dislikes that only one of his two last names is included and used at his U.S. school. To maintain the family heritage and identity that comes with both last names, he educates his classmates and teachers about why he has two last names.

- **Keywords:** Mexican immigrant family, Female protagonist, Urban Midwest setting
- **Text Details:** Picture book, English text
- **Summary:** Based on the Pilsen neighborhood in Chicago, America and her family find their way in a new city and country. Although she finds new challenges and encounters in the U.S., a bilingual teacher inspires her to find her voice in writing.

- **Keywords:** Mexican American family, Female protagonist, Urban California setting
- **Text Details:** Picture book, English & Spanish bilingual text
- **Summary:** This text tells the story of the only girl in a large Mexican-American family. With her five brothers, two parents, and multiple relatives, she yearns for her very own room. Working together, her family finds a space that she can make her own.

- **Keywords:** Cuban American family, Female protagonist, Urban Florida setting
- **Text Details:** English & Spanish mixed narrative
Summary: This text takes us from New England to Miami, where a young girl visits her extended Cuban-American family for the holidays and experiences the rich cultural background including food, festive, family, and religious traditions.


- Keywords: Bi-racial (Colombian and American), Female protagonist
- Text Details: Picture book, English & Spanish bilingual text
- Summary: Liliana has two grandmothers – one American grandmother who lives right down the road, and another who lives in South America. Even though both are different and one is very far away, Liliana loves and learns about herself from both grandmothers.

**Award Winners:**

* Pura Belpre Award
** Americas Book Award
^ Tomas Rivera Award

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**MY NEXT STEPS FOR BUILDING CULTURALLY RELEVANT LIBRARY**

While I have a number of children’s books for and by Latinos, I recognized the need to diversify the stories that the texts told. Using the three Latino children’s literature awards (i.e., Pura Belpre, Americas, Tomas Rivera), as well as targeted web and library searches, I was able to find culturally relevant and authentic texts that reflected multiple countries of origin, generations of immigration, genders of protagonist, and uses of Spanish and English languages.

Of the 16 texts included in this list, I found that five titles are not available in my local or school library. In order to provide these rich and diverse stories to my students, I plan to purchase these five texts. Then, with the 16 texts listed, I will plan a read-aloud schedule across 4-5 weeks in order for students to enjoy, explore, compare, and contrast the many stories about children their age across multiple backgrounds, settings, and storylines.

In addition to the texts listed here that fit the criteria, I found a number of other new texts by Latino authors that I also plan to purchase and use in my classroom, particularly the 2012 Latino children’s literature award winners that I had not previously explored.
RELATED RESOURCES

LITERATURE LISTS/WEBSITES

- Loyola University Chicago Library – Multicultural Literature Lists
  o http://libguides.luc.edu/c.php?g=49784&p=320661
- Annotated Bibliographies of Multicultural Literature
  o http://www.k12reader.com/10-annotated-bibliographies-of-multicultural-childrensya-books/
- Culturally Relevant Literature: Cynthia Leitich Smith Site
  o http://www.cynthialeitichsmith.com
- Multicultural Literature Book Lists by Group
  o Includes: African American, Chinese American, Japanese American, Jewish American, Korean American, Latino/Hispanic American, Middle Eastern American, Native American, Vietnamese American
  o http://www.multiculturalchildrenslit.com
- Practitioner Brief, includes stand-out authors
  o http://www.nccrest.org/Briefs/Literacy_final.pdf

LITERATURE AWARDS

- African American: Coretta Scott King Award
  o http://www.ala.org/srrt/csking
- African American: John Steptoe Award
  o http://www.ala.org/srrt/csking/new_talent.html
- Asian American: The Asian American Literature Award
  o http://www.aaww.org/aaww_awards.html
- Asian American: Asian Pacific American Award
  o http://www.apalaweb.org/awards/literature-awards/
- Latino: The Americas Award
  o http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/Clacs/outreach_americas.html
- Latino: The Pura Belpre Award
  o http://www.ala/org/alsc/belpre.html
- Native American: The Oyate Organization
  o http://www.oyate.org

LITERATURE CIRCLES

- Book Clubs and Reading Groups Resources
  o http://www.book-clubs-resource.com
- Harvey Daniel's Literature Circle Website
  o http://www.literaturecircles.com
- Laura Candler's Literature Circle Strategies
• Literature Circles Resource Center
  • http://www.litcircles.org

CLASSROOM LIBRARY GRANTS
• Laura Bush Foundation Library Grants
  • http://www.laurabushfoundation.com/
• Target Corporation Reading Grants
• Dollar General Literacy Grants
  • http://www2.dollargeneral.com/dgliteracy/Pages/grant_programs.aspx

PROFESSIONAL LITERATURE