

Cultural Journeys: Meeting the Needs of All Learners through Literacy
David E. Walker, Ed.D.
Presented at the Keystone State Reading Association
41st Annual Conference, Valley Forge, PA
October 2008

1. Why should teachers instruct cultural literacy activities?

- Common Knowledge
- Motivation
- Melting Pot (seen in the 21C as an archaic concept)
- Comments by participants:
 - Human situation despite differences
 - Shared experiences
 - Tossed salad (not losing beauty of culture)
 - Schema-more involvement/increased learning
 - Builds empathy and understanding
 - Teach tolerance/acceptance for other cultures
 - Pride in one's own culture
 - Building a society with less conflict
 - Less bullying and hatred

2. What is your own definition of cultural literacy?

- Definitions by participants:
 - Learning an awareness of cultural differences and similarities using a variety of literature to expand an ever-evolving society
 - Reflective reading of one's own culture
 - Experience other cultures in whatever way possible (foods, sharing customs, etc.)

3. What lessons have you taught that specifically meet the cultural literacy needs of your students?

- Responses by participants:
 - Use of stories that reflect the specific diverse cultural backgrounds of the students.
 - Food, traditions, origin, geographic location of availability
 - Folklore and/or history of past generations

- Using literature and materials from different cultures and comparing and contrasting them
- Weekly “class meetings” in which stories are used to discuss various issues, topics, concerns, etc.
- Special speakers and presentations that bring authentic experiences and objects (money, food, clothing)
- Celebrating heritage
- Round Robin-class experts share specific topics that they have researched with the whole school
- Analyze propaganda connected to the Holocaust
- Introducing other cultures in pre-school
- Sharing across gender and age

4. What children’s literature titles have you found that successfully meet the cultural literacy needs of your students?

- Titles that deal with Immigration:
 - *How Many Days to America?* (Cuban Immigration) by Eve Bunting and Beth Peck)
 - *Everyone Cooks Rice* by Norah Dooley and Peter J. Thornton
 - *How my Parents Learned to Eat* by Ina R. Freidman
- Titles that support authentic literature of cultures:
 - *Folktales Around the World*
 - *Buford Series*
 - *Ruby Bridges* by Robert Coles and George Ford
 - *Gold Cadillac* by Mildred D. Taylor and Max Ginsberg
 - *The Other Side* by Jacqueline Woodson and E. B. Lewis
 - *Tar Beach* by Faith Reingold
 - Variants of the Cinderella story:
 - ✓ *The Golden Sandal: A Middle Eastern Cinderella Story* by Rebecca Hickox and Will Hillenbrand
 - ✓ Persian Cinderella
 - ✓ Korean Cinderella
 - ✓ Yeh-Shen by Ai-Ling Louie
 - ✓ Rough Faced Girl
 - Titles for Young Adults:
 - ✓ *Rules of Survival* (Werlin)
 - ✓ *Chanda’s Secrets* (Stratton)
 - ✓ *Monster* (W. Dean Myers)
 - ✓ *Milkweed* (J. Spinnelli)
 - ✓ *Outsiders* by S. E. Hinton