

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN 21ST CENTURY CLASSROOMS: CHALLENGES AND EXPECTATIONS

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Bringing the Global Society into Our Classrooms: Insights into English Language Learners through Children's and Adolescent Literature

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“In this age of multi-media information, readers and viewers have continual and immediate access to international events, cultures, and people. The notion of a global community has the potential of becoming a reality since information and insights upon which to build understanding is possibly as close as the movement of one's hand. However, missing from this abundance of information is the opportunity to share the experiences of others—to read, ponder, personally connect, and identify with those in other cultures” (Mathis, 2006, p. 49).

The above statement was written in an article for *English in Texas*, the journal of the Texas Council of Teachers of the English Language Arts (an affiliate of the National Council of Teachers of English). Its purpose was to open readers' eyes to resources for helping students, and adults, move beyond a tourist perspective of the global society to building bridges across cultures through “thoughtful dialogue around international literature so that children can reflect on their

own cultural experiences and imagine global experiences beyond their own” (Short, 2009, unpagged). Story is a powerful vehicle to discover the lives of others and build personal bridges among diverse cultures.

With the belief that literature has the power to move readers beyond the fear and stereotypes about different nationalities that are frequently promoted by the media, I thoughtfully examined the demographics that describe today’s classrooms. The refugees, immigrants, and political asylees that contribute to the English language learner (ELL) population represent countries that include Somalia, Russia, Cuba, Vietnam, Iran, Burma, Sudan, Ethiopia, China, Columbia, Venezuela, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and others (Coward & Dam, 2008). Over 400 languages are represented in our country (Shin & Bruno, 2003), and “English learners are the fastest growing group in the U. S. schools today, accounting for 10.5% of the total public school student population in Pre-K through Grade 12 in 2004-2005, a 56.2% increase over the 1994-1995 figures [National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs, 2008]” (Hadaway & Young, 2009).

A brief reading of these statistics, or perhaps even a visit to public school classrooms, and one will realize that the significant role of literature that is international in nature can not only serve to make readers aware of the global society, but it also has the potential to make students and teachers aware that the global society can now be found in their classrooms as seen through the students who are part of our learning communities. “The opportunity to share the experiences of others—to read, ponder, personally connect,

and identify with those of other cultures,” as mentioned in the opening quotation, exists daily in our linguistically diverse classrooms. What is often missing, however, are the bridges to connect young readers and their teachers to the many countries represented in our ELL population. Literature can serve as part of the infrastructure of those bridges within our classroom communities.

Whether children are newly immigrated to this country or whether they are living in homes where the adult family members are immigrants and continue to speak their language and maintain cultural traditions in their daily lives, literature can provide insights or at least be the vehicle that invites questions, dialogue, and authentic interest in the rich life experiences of others. A community of learners collaborates in this process, and as they become informed about places and events much different than those of their immediate society, they learn to understand and value the life experiences of others. The goal of understanding the English language learner should not be just that of a teacher becoming informed but that of the whole community learning about each other and finding voice in situations where one's literal voice may not always be easily articulated. In describing Cristina Igoa's intuition regarding immigrant children, Alma Flor Ada said that Igoa “understood that uprooted immigrant children would not be able to truly benefit from a dialogue with their new reality until they had the opportunity to express the intricacy of their inner world” (Ada, 1995, ix). While the topic here was using art to surpass children's incipient abilities with English that might limit their expression, teachers can also consider the role of literature as a means to invite expressions

of their inner worlds through dialogue and other artistic forms.

International literature, as used here, is inclusive of literature that is published in another country and translated into English, published in English but in another country, and books written within the United States but whose characters and settings are international (although some people in a narrow definition of international do not include this last category). It has the potential to inform about people, places, and events in the world while putting faces, personalities, emotions, and values to experiences that text books and media often report merely in terms of numbers and dates. This body of literature is rapidly growing as authors and publishers realize the need for U.S. classrooms to hear the stories of other countries. These stories can inform about the cultures of many of our ELL students as they provide examples of the celebrations, struggles, and resiliency of people world-wide that parallel the life experiences of these students. The scope of such literature is far too vast to comprehensively share here. However, in the next sections of this chapter, selected titles will be grouped around particular themes that speak to the needs of an ELL classroom as teachers seek to nurture insights among students about each other and to provide a reflection of themselves in the books they read that validates their lives and builds identity. Examples of how this literature is used will be shared to hopefully ignite original ideas within the various classroom teachers and contexts in which they work. A final section will present potential resources for identifying existing and future literature titles that represent the cultures of our ELL students.

Understanding the impact of the immigration process on identity

In describing the stages that she observed in immigrant ELL children, Igoa (1995) states:

If there is one characteristic of the uprooting experience that appears to be shared by all immigrant children irrespective of nationality, economic status, family stability, or any other factor, it is the silent stage when the children experience the school culture as different from their own and when their inability to communicate with peers is caused by a language or cultural difference. (p. 38)

Immigration from one country to another is a life event and an ongoing process that most individuals do not experience. The context in which a child has come to know the world is suddenly changed and most frequently includes other stressful situations that initiated the immigration. Despite the importance of talking about one's personal experiences and feelings, this is often not possible due to both psychological and language limiting factors. However, a story in which the characters are experiencing a similar process of relocating into a new culture can often provide opportunity for reflective, empathetic and personal connection to characters and situations, and various forms of response can provide a means of sharing this connection with others.

For example, *Ziba Came on a Boat* (Lofthouse, 2008) is the story of a young girl who is traveling by ship with her family as they are escaping turmoil in her former homeland.

As the ship rocks and creaks, she remembers all that she has left behind and wonders about her new life. We don't know where her final destination may be, although the book was created in Australia. However, a family fleeing from turmoil is not a new scenario and readers quickly identify with Ziba as she looks to her family for security in this frightening circumstance. Recently, one teacher of ELL 6th grade students read this book aloud and invited students to respond through writing and art. They were asked to recall their memories of leaving their homeland and their expectations of coming to America. Students eagerly participated, even those who had not previously demonstrated an eagerness to be involved in the mandated classroom lessons. In one case, a student had not written anything until this opportunity since the beginning of the semester. Students did not hesitate as they approached the task of writing on a paper boat—a representation of the way to another country—about their connections to this character. *Ziba Came on a Boat* invited discussion that validated their experiences and emotions as they came to a new country for a variety of reasons and gave them opportunity to share their feelings of loss and immigration struggles of family members as well as their enjoyment of their current life.

Four Feet Two Sandals (Williams & Kahdra, 2007) tells the story of girls who await going to the United States in a refugee camp. As donated clothing comes to the camp, each girl finds one sandal she likes only to discover very soon that the other person has the mate. The situation creates a friendship as they share the shoes and wait in their difficult living conditions until it is their turn to travel to the U.S. The shoes become symbolic of their friendship and hope. The

author of this book is writing from her own experiences working with refugees and the inspiration for this book came from a child's question as to why there were no books about children such as herself. This story presents an immigrant situation that may or may not provide a personal connection for students; however, many can identify with the hardships of preparing to leave their homeland without the items and people most dear to them. While no one book offers all the possible stories, *Four Feet Two Sandals* is another vehicle for discussion to which teachers can provide insight into the other countries to which people travel in hopes of a better life.

For older students, *La Linea* (Jaramillo, 2002) presents the controversial issue of illegal immigration through the perspective of a fifteen-year-old boy and his younger sister. Living in poverty with his grandmother, Miguel looks forward to going to the U.S. to earn money. His father has worked for years to save money for Miguel to pay the coyote to take him across the border, but the money is stolen during his first attempt and he must make the illegal journey across the California border with other travelers. Miguel realizes that the hardest journey is just beginning once he arrives on the other side. Readers are made aware of the courage, love of family, and desire to better one's life in a context that calls for compassion and a better understanding of the people who attempt to cross illegally. *Crossing the Wire* (Paulson, 2002) is another story on this same theme that strives, not to justify the situation, but to help readers understand the lives and values of those attempting to cross the border.

Tasting the Sky is a memoir by Ibsitam Barakat (2007) who passionately describes her beloved Palestine prior to her

immigrating to the United States where she now lives and works. The story shares many memories to include those of her as a young child at the beginning of the 6-day war. Her memories help readers to realize what it is like for a child to live in a country at war, but most importantly, they give an insider's view of Palestine that is not often provided in literature and points to the strong emotions with which an immigrant holds close her homeland.

The Arrival (Tan, 2008) is quite a unique immigrant story that is told through a wordless, graphic format. The strangeness of a new environment and the awe of the newcomer are told in sepia shades. This complex, metaphorical presentation uses fantasy to show the many inspiring discoveries as well as the personal longings of the main character. Because of the abstract presentation, this might be more appropriate for middle school and older, but younger readers have found interesting details that tell the immigrant story. While considering the more abstract texts, Peter Sis's *The Wall: Growing Up Behind the Iron Curtain* (2007) has been greatly acclaimed for its visual presentation of his own life and his rebellion during the Cold War that eventually resulted in his leaving for the United States. The illustrative method of telling his story will remind readers of the many reasons that people have immigrated and the situations that encouraged them to do so. Also, the way these last two books are created reminds all readers that there are many ways to tell one's story with art, perhaps, being a more detailed way to show the complexities of the immigrant experience. Such wordless books are rich in context and provide a sense of agency in the ELL reading process.

Resiliency of children in challenging situations

While the above titles most definitely serve to inform about resilient children, many books are available whose focus is not necessarily that of immigration but of sharing other countries through historical and sociopolitical situations and how their citizens are affected by and dealing with the situation.

Sosu's Call (Asare, 2002) is set in a nameless West African village. Sosu's story is about a crippled boy who can't go to school but spends his time in the village. His father is superstitious about his situation and doesn't want him to be seen more than necessary. When a storm threatens the village, Sosu heroically drags himself to the village drums to signal the people to return home. It is then that his notoriety results in his receiving a wheelchair. Children in all cultures face disabilities and often with a courageous resilience true of many of our children.

Ryan and Jimmy: And the Well in Africa that Brought Them Together (Shoveller, 2006) is the true story of young Ryan, a Canadian boy, who decides to raise money to build a well after he learns about the Ugandan village that only has a minimal, dirty water supply. His efforts become known internationally and the story evolves into a successful effort to build a well. Jimmy, a member of the village, and Ryan become friends and when Jimmy's life is threatened by uprisings, he eventually becomes part of Ryan's family. Natural resources are often taken for granted, as is the possibility of children taking a lead in social causes, so this book offers multiple insights into the global society.

In *Home Now* (Beake, 2007), Sieta is a South African child who has been orphaned by AIDS and goes to live in Home Now, a new housing development where her auntie lives. She misses her life with her parents; however, after visiting a local elephant park and discovering these elephants are orphans too, she begins to keep a watchful eye on one baby elephant in particular. Author notes provide resources for young readers to learn more about the AIDS problem and the children orphaned by it in Africa. The first three books in this section each represent a different country in Africa and point to the possibility of looking at the many situations and life styles across the countries of this diverse continent. The following books are a sampling of the many countries represented in literature today.

Sélavi, orphaned because of political violence and living alone on the streets of Haiti, joins other orphan children as they struggle together to survive. Based on a true story set in an orphanage opened in 1986, *Sélavi* (Landowne, 2004) tells the story of children as collective heroes surviving through hard work and ingenuity. Information is also provided by the author as to her own Haitian childhood and the country's proud history despite the political upheaval. Understanding how such civil actions can displace children, even making them orphans, can be important to understanding the backgrounds of some ELL students.

In *The Breadwinner*, Ellis (2001) has written the first of a series of stories that takes place in the early years of the Taliban in Afghanistan. The author tells of the harsh realities of women and girls as they must often survive on their own. Trapped inside her family's one room home, Parvana's father

is taken away and she dresses as a boy to be able to support her mother and siblings. *The Breadwinner* and Ellis's following books reveal the lives of ordinary Afghans from the perspective of a female protagonist whose family is educated and who is savvy about the role of politics in her daily life. Many of our immigrant children are from very educated families and need opportunities to step outside the silence imposed by their lack of strong language skills. While books such as *The Breadwinner*, a chapter book, may require being read aloud, the time is well spent as it offers opportunities for the classroom community to listen and discuss together—a requirement for developing language learners.

At the age of 13 Ma Yan must quit school to work in the fields and help her family who live in Northern China. She writes in a diary about her love of school and her physically stressful life that includes hunger. Eventually her diary ends up in the hands of a journalist, and as a result, *The Diary of Ma Yan: The Struggles and Hopes of a Chinese Schoolgirl* (Yan, 2005) is now written in 13 languages. The courage and determination of this young girl who traveled long roads to school until she was no longer able to go continue to dominate her life when suddenly forced to remain home to work. Such appreciation of the opportunity to attend school can be nurtured in many immigrant children, as well as those American born, if they perceive school as a place of acceptance of their culture and their efforts -- a place where their personal identities can thrive.

The Happiness of Kati (Vejjajiva, 2006) shares the story of a nine-year-old girl living in contemporary Thailand with her grandmother. Her mother left when she was young, and

when Kati finally gets to meet her, the mother is dying of ALS, commonly known as Lou Gehrig's disease. Kati's family represents a higher economic status than many people of Thailand but the context described is true to the traditional village life. As do many children today, Kati has to deal with separation from her parents and the uncertainty of where they are and exactly who her father is.

Merely reading these books is not enough to invite students, and teachers, into critical and imaginative thinking about other cultures that helps them to be informed and understanding of others. Thoughtful, response-based dialogue is a first step in reflecting on and socially constructing meaning with and about others. As literature discussions take place, extensions of these discussions might be dramatic techniques as in a process drama approach in which students place themselves inside the story, taking the place of characters within the scenario described. Or, perhaps they can write a journal entry from the perspective of a character or describe what they might do in this same situation. They might also find contemporary news in which a similar situation is presented and how it is being dealt with by other global communities. In a similar vein, they might write their own newspaper report or carry out an interview with another student as the main character. Each book and the personal connections of the readers will determine the most effective approach to helping readers step inside the story and understanding the backgrounds of the people they meet there.

Learning about daily lives within the global community

While the preceding books that share challenging situations also share the daily lives of their characters, one significant role of children's and adolescent literature is to show a positive image of other cultures' daily life experiences. What might a child have experienced in their daily lives prior to coming to the United States? What common daily experiences of their past are not so common here and what is extremely new to them in their new home? What commonalities between their former lives and current ones might help them feel more secure in their interactions here? While learning about other cultures through these books, children who may be in classes from these cultures might be called upon as the "expert" in documenting whether the book reflects their own lives as part of a particular culture. They might share their own perspectives on the book. We know that for any cultural book, there are numerous perspectives on how that one particular culture might enact their lives; one book, however authentic, will represent only a portion of the people of a particular area or culture.

As with the previous section, the first three titles are representative of countries in Africa, and combined with the African focused books in the previous section, they can be the beginnings of a text set on learning about daily life in contemporary Africa—a concept that can be quite informative as readers are presented with authentic images of an area that many perceive as a country rather than one of the world's largest continents.

One Hen: How One Small Loan Made a Big Difference (Milway, 2008) shares the strategy of microlending that is

making a difference in the lives of many people from countries with overall low socioeconomic status. This story is about a young Ghanaian boy who, after his father's death, is living in poverty with his mother. When she receives a loan to buy a cart to better her life, he spends a few coins on a hen and this investment eventually takes the young lad from one hen to a poultry farm business and the ability to help others in the community. His ability and willingness to make a change presents an optimistic perspective on such communities and the people therein. Based on a true story, the author provides insight to the organizations that support nations through microloans.

My Father's Shop (Ichikawa, 2006) introduces us to Mustafa who lives in Morocco where his father sells carpets in the market. Learning various languages is critical to their business, but when young Mustafa becomes tired of "working" with his dad and wants to play, his father sends him off into the market with a colorful but damaged carpet. Mustafa finds a friendly rooster, whose color resembles that of his carpet, and diverse people who teach him the rooster's sounds in many languages. A celebration of language and the imaginative mind of a child, this book brings readers to the market place of Morocco. What a great way to think about the resource of being multilingual while learning about the global society as well!

Planting the Trees of Kenya: The Story of Wangari Maathai (Nivola, 2008) tells the story of the winner of the 2004 Nobel peace prize who grew up in Kenya surrounded by the beauty of nature. By the time she returns from college in the U.S. to Kenya, however, the land has been stripped of its

resources. She takes it upon herself to restore the land by educating her people as to the care of the natural world as she works side by side with them to replant trees. Founding the Green Belt movement, her work is to be admired as is the lesson of hope this book sends to all students to accomplish what is in one's heart. Realizing that powerful demonstrations of determination in making the world a better place are found globally is significant knowledge for learners to discover early in life.

In *New Clothes on New Year's Day* (Bae, 2007) a young Korean girl shares her excitement over the celebration of the New Year in Korea by donning new clothes made by her mother. Readers share in her excitement as she describes each piece of clothing with reverence and joy, and they learn much about this celebratory time of the year as Koreans prepare to begin all things anew!

When I Grow Up, I Will Win the Nobel Peace Prize (Pin, 2006) was written and published first in German. It depicts the story of a typical mischievous little boy who decides that if he is going to win this prize, he must change his ways. While he realizes that grown-ups are recognized for being good, brave, and kind, his life currently does not reflect this. With a history of the Nobel Peace Prize provided at the end, this is a story of a typical child realizing that the struggle for peace begins now with little acts of kindness, despite how hard it is to always act in this way. It is a reminder that such actions are the responsibility of everyone and as young readers contemplate other children in the world, it points to the common struggle of all people to be kind and just in their actions.

Mia's family lives in poverty in the Andes Mountains of Chile. Her father sells scrap metal and hopes one day to build a brick home for his family. In *Mia's Story: A Sketchbook of Hopes & Dreams* (Foreman, 2006), readers meet Mia as her father brings her a gift of a puppy who, sadly, disappears. As Mia searches for him, she discovers beautiful flowers in the mountains, flowers that eventually become her family's source of income. Mia shows resiliency, courage, and hope in situations that ask a child to become an adult in many ways. We learn of her way of life in Chile as well as how her ingenuity helps her meet the challenges life has to offer.

Based on the memories of her childhood, in *Peach Heaven* Yangsook Choi (2000) tells of growing up in Korea in a place known for the most delicious peaches in the country. One day a severe rainstorm brings many peaches to the ground and as families enjoy them, Yangsook becomes concerned about the farmers who are losing their crops. She decides the children must help and the story sends a global message that children can make a difference. The traditional homes, clothing, and lifestyle of Koreans are well depicted to include the significance of the peach to the culture.

In rural Haiti, Josias works on his family's garden and cannot go to school with his friends. In *Josias, Hold the Book* (Elvgren, 2006), they ask him to come and hold the book, a treat for these students, but he feels he must help his family. However, when the crops don't grow and his friends' teacher sends a book about crop rotation and tired soil, he realizes how important it is that he learns to read and offers to tend the garden in the evening instead of playing soccer if he can only go to school. With themes of reading and dedication to family

and responsibilities, this book is a glimpse into the social and economic life of school children in Haiti today.

Naima wants to be a rickshaw driver and help her family financially, although a woman's roles include only keeping house and decorating. The readers of *Rickshaw Girl* (Matali, 2007) experience life in contemporary Bangladesh, which is in a current transition concerning gender roles. They can relate to the love and support of family when her attempt to help results in more debt and she uses her ingenuity and talents to solve the situation.

While the strategies shared in the last section apply also to the titles listed here, another idea might be using a program such as E-Pals and locate via the Internet people from other countries who might share about their daily lives. Of course, the Internet offers information about many countries and many of the topics above can be verified and explored in personal student inquiries for which they report back to the class through both writing and perhaps some other artistic format—visual arts, drama, music.

Looking across cultures and countries in one book

The books shared in this section represent that useful group of titles in which a theme or topic is shown as universal but each culture represented has a diverse perspective or representation of that topic. Both light and serious themes are central to the themes of the selections.

Have you ever thought that the water supply on earth is endless? Have you ever wondered why long droughts that lead to famine in some “third-world” countries make

headlines? Have you ever needlessly left water running in your house? *One Well, the Story of Water on Earth* (Strauss, 2007) presents a comparative look at how water is distributed across the globe and invites students to think about these as well as other questions regarding this resource. An array of surprising facts are presented, such as all the water that is on the earth is already here and is constantly recycled; or the average person in the U. S. uses over 50 times more water daily than individuals in many of the world's countries. An author's narrative at the end provides further information and speaks to the need to conserve this commodity. Looking across cultures at this staple of daily life can be a powerful insight into the lives of students who come from this country. By possibly pairing this with *Ryan and Jimmy: And the Well in Africa that Brought Them Together*, mentioned earlier, the significance of Ryan and Jimmy's efforts to build a well becomes more obvious to young readers.

Glass Slipper Gold Sandal: A Worldwide Cinderella (Fleischman, 2007) is yet another retelling of Cinderella whose theme is universal as proven by the hundreds of variants that have come out of a diversity of cultures. However, Fleischman has chosen to portray different cultural aspects on each page of this story—both through text and through illustration. This doesn't take the place of reading the traditional stories from each culture, but it is a reminder of the similarities of our life themes across cultures although we may portray these themes in different ways.

Mama Says: A Book of Love for Mothers and Sons (Walker, 2009) shares wise sayings of mothers to their sons across cultures. Each page features traditional clothing,

sayings in original languages as well as English, and illustrative backgrounds for every culture represented. The universal relationships between mothers and sons are sensitively shared through sayings that deal with courage, faith, kindness, diligence and other values. ELL students as well as others can easily acknowledge the universal ideas as presented in this poetic text. Notes at the end provide insight into the various languages.

What the World Eats (D'Aluisio & Menzel, 2008) shares 25 households in 21 countries from cities to rural areas to refugee camps, in which the authors look at the economic factors, life circumstances, and available sources of food. Readers learn about people of the world in many different contexts that serve to inform about much more than just food. What does a week's worth of groceries look like in another country? How much does it cost? Does it provide the nutritional needs of those eating it? This photographic essay is taken from the adult book *The Hungry Planet* (2007) by the same authors.

Amelia to Zora: Twenty-Six Women Who Changed the World (Chin-Lee, 2005) and *Akira to Zolton: Twenty-Six Men Who Changed the World* (Chin-Lee, 2006) are collections of short biographies. Each book takes the reader to a variety of countries and eras as they describe lives of powerful and significant people. Arranged with an alphabetical framework, the brief biographies provide evidence of positive influences on the world from many countries and can help students have greater respect for the accomplishments of diverse countries and people.

In thinking about how these books might be used, a natural means would be to keep a map available for students to identify exactly where the regions or cultures are that the book addresses. If more than one book is used in this category, teachers might maintain the markers on the map after reading one book while a second or third is read. Realizing that a particular traditional cultural tale shown in *Glass Slipper*, *Gold Sandal* takes place in the same country as one of the women who is highlighted in *Amelia to Zora* or as one of the countries identified as having little water for daily use can help students make connections to other people as having many-faceted lives just as they have. Of course, adding markers on this map for single-culture books, such a title that focuses on a child facing challenges, can help readers realize that there are other aspects of children's lives besides war or natural disasters that are so obvious in most forms of daily media.

Another strategy to use with books that go across cultures is to add one's own culture to the book if it is missing. With a very diverse ELL classroom there will be many stories that students will want to tell to extend these titles using the framework the author has created.

Sources for international literature

The examples presented in this article are but a sampling of events, cultures, countries, and people that are available in literature published both abroad and in the US. Therefore, as one acknowledges the value of international literature in the classroom, it is important to know where to turn for useful lists of exceptional titles that continuously present authentic

images and insights of other countries and their cultures. The resources shared here offer excellent lists by people who are widely read and give attention to authenticity in global literature.

USBBY/IBBY (United States/International Board on Books for Young People) is an organization dedicated to promoting international understanding through children's books. Founded in Switzerland in 1953, IBBY strives to provide access to books of high quality to children everywhere as well as encouraging the publication and distribution of such books in all countries, especially in developing countries, encouraging support for those people involved with children and literature, and stimulating research and scholarly works in the field of children's literature.

Within this organization and its various national sections, such as USBBY, there are various resources to locate authentic international literature, often published within specific countries. One source is the IBBY website itself, <http://www.IBBY.org>. Now, for example, there is a virtual library collection from and about Africa on this site. USBBY has recently established a yearly "Outstanding International Booklist." By going to the USBBY website, <http://www.usbby.org/>, on the left column readers can click on "Outstanding International Books." They will find the book lists for past years as well as a link to yearly articles in *School Library Journal*. This article has an extensive annotated bibliography.

USBBY also has a biannual newsletter in which an ongoing column entitled "How Does that Translate" shares annotations of recently translated books from many countries

for readers of all ages. This collection of titles is rich with cultural insights and, since it is written by people within other countries, the perspectives are critical to include in classrooms. The newsletter also has current information about a variety of awards and events around children's literature. For information about receiving the newsletter that comes with membership in USBBY, please visit <http://www.usbby.org/>.

Notable Books for a Global Society is a list of 30 books created yearly by a committee of the Children's Literature Special Interest Group of the International Reading Association. These books are selected from submissions of publishers and are judged by qualities of all excellent literature as well as:

- Cultural accuracy and authenticity of characters in terms of physical characteristics, intellectual abilities, leadership, and social and economic status;
- Richness in cultural details;
- Honoring diversity as well as common bonds in humanity;
- In-depth treatment of cultural issues;
- Interaction among characters across cultural groups;
- Inclusion of "minority" group members for a purpose other than filling a "quota."

An annotated list may be found in the SIG's journal, *The Dragon Lode*, as well as on the website at

<http://www.tcnj.edu/~childlit/proj/nbgs/intro-nbgs.html>.

These books range in reading levels from grades K-12.

The American Library Association gives the Batchelder Award yearly to a highly significant translated book. The ALA website at <http://www.ala.org> can provide information on titles that have received the Batchelder Award.

World of Words (WOW) is a recently established resource with the goal of creating bridges for students across cultures as well as helping educators locate, evaluate, and create strategies around this literature. It is a virtual site, <http://www.wowlit.org> with the actual physical library located at the University of Arizona's College of Education in Tucson. On the website are two on-line journals: *WOW Stories* that consists of rich vignettes of teachers using authentic cultural books and *WOW Review*, literature reviews that give specific attention to each book's criteria of cultural authenticity. There is also an ongoing listing of books in a data base that have been judged by their cultural authenticity.

Several published books also present excellent resources on international literature. *Global Perspectives in Children's Literature* (Freeman & Lehman, 2000) while a bit older presents valuable information as to why and how to use international books in addition to authors, illustrators, and titles published through 2000. Several books within a series edited by USBBY members provide useful annotated bibliographies of titles arranged according to countries and titles. They are: *Children's Books from Other Countries* (Tomlinson, 1998); *The World through Children's Books* (Stan, 2002); and *Crossing Boundaries with Children's Books* (Gebel, 2006). Another addition to this series is currently

being edited by Dr. Linda Pavonetti. *Breaking Boundaries with Global Literature: Celebrating Diversity in K-12 Classrooms* (Hadaway & McKenna, 2007) is a book in which past Notable Books for a Global Society are shared, with the chapters being focused on the suggested strategies of past committee members. This is a rich resources for both teachers and students as they consider just how to engage students in reflective interactions around international books.

These resources serve as a beginning point for adding to our understanding of our ELLs. However, it is critical that the reader, be it teacher or students, are invited into contexts where dialogue is valued and various strategies are considered for use that place the reader into the story—into the situation of others through personal connections. As Wilhelm and Edmiston (1998, p. 4) cogently put it, “Imagining possibilities is at the core of understanding other people, other times, and other places.” Thus, as we discover similarities in hopes, values, and emotions, these connections are more easily made as imagination lets us step out of the comfort of our own lives—even if only momentarily.

Teachers as learners and teachers as facilitators of community are not new concepts; however, with today’s rapidly changing demographics that place ELLs from many cultures in our classrooms, the need to reconsider the responsibilities of each of these teacher roles, including learner and facilitator of community is paramount.

If learning is about transforming the self (Gee, 2004; Rogers, 2004), it is necessary to think about creating spaces where students can draw upon the funds of knowledge, linguistic resources, and life experiences they bring with them

to classroom contexts, engage with others in critical curricular opportunities, and learn together so that schooling isn't about moving from one world to another but about transforming worlds through shared, complex journeys. To do so means creating spaces where language learners' resources are seen as rich contributions to communities which all members learn from (Van Sluys & Reinier, 2006, p. 322).

Children's and adolescent literature can play a significant bridge in the shared journey described above.

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