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Global Education Through Children's Literature

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Global Education Through Children’s Literature
Emily Schmidt - Illinois Wesleyan University

Research Question: How can I best help students gain a genuine understanding and respect for other countries and cultures? My interest in this subject began as a result of my study abroad experience in Barcelona, Spain.

Why is Global Education Important?
• If students are not exposed to countries and cultures that are different than their own, they will not be prepared to compete or participate in our global economy.
• Global education can help create and foster a classroom environment that welcomes and encourages all forms of diversity.
• Helps to validate and positively represent the viewpoint and values of a variety of cultures.
• Provides students with necessary background knowledge to reconsider cultural stereotypes.

Connection to Children’s Literature
• Allows students to bring their background knowledge and personal experiences to the classroom.
• Children’s books serve as a powerful tool to generate classroom discussion and provides students with a safe way to discuss unfamiliar or difficult topics.
• Well-written and well-illustrated literature allows students to view the world through an authentic and new perspective.
• Builds community in the classroom through shared sessions of discovery.

Definitions
• Multicultural Education: a total curriculum reform that seeks to achieve social justice by educating students about the racial, economic, religious, gender, ability and ethnic diversity in the country in which the students reside.
• Global Education: the study of human beliefs and values, global systems, global issues and problems, global history, cross-cultural understanding/interaction, awareness of human choices, the development of analytical and evaluative skills and strategies for participation and involvement (Lucas, 2010).

Implications for Student Teaching
• Interested to see how my predominately white classroom responds to global children’s literature.
• A great challenge will be teaching the content without applying a Western perspective and an “over there” mentality.
• Important to create an environment where all cultures are understood as both different and “normal.”