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Incorporating Multicultural Literature in an Elementary Language Arts Classroom

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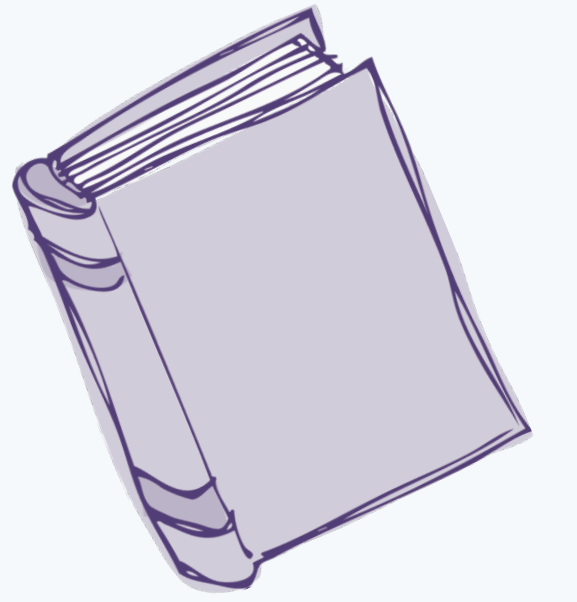
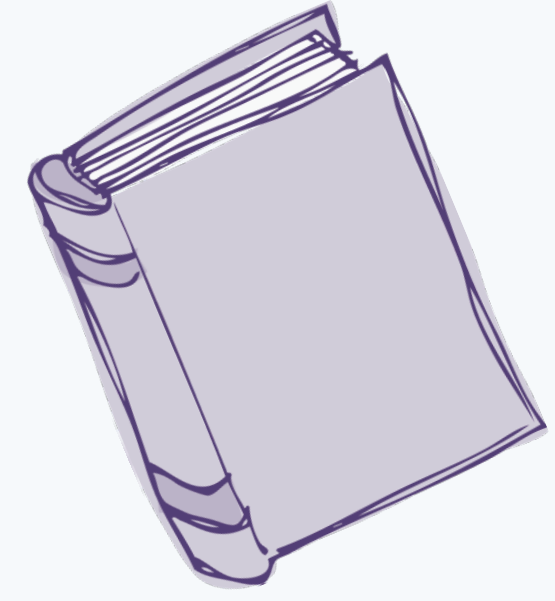
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INCORPORATING MULTICULTURAL LITERATURE IN AN ELEMENTARY LANGUAGE ARTS CLASSROOM

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Research Question

How are diverse cultures being incorporated into the language arts curriculum through literature, if at all? If not, how can it be incorporated into the classroom?

Literature Review

- *Multicultural literatures* are books, stories, and myths that are from, about, and written by people from different “cultural, linguistic, socioeconomic, and religious backgrounds who have been marginalized, and are considered outside the mainstream of society” (Morrell & Morrell, 2012).
- Towell and Smilen (2009) examined how to incorporate art and illustrations from different cultures into lessons, increasing student interest and exposing them to diverse cultures.
- A technique used by Smolen, Collins, and Still (2008) includes exposing students to similarities and differences found among different ethnicities by using common themes found in multicultural literature, thus creating a mutual respect among students.
- Studies show that there has been an increase in amount of students that are ELL (August, McCardle, & Shanahan, 2014), increasing the need for more language incorporation in classrooms.

Methodology

- I examined the stories presented in 2 volumes of a textbook – Reading: Adventures by Houghton Mifflin (2008).
- I looked for evidence of diverse cultures and how they were represented in each story found in the textbooks.
- I looked for three sources of multiculturalism: cultural content, including traditions and customs, illustrations, and languages.

Results and Data Analysis

- There were only elements of a few cultures other than American that were incorporated into some of the stories.
- There were only a few languages other than English found in the textbooks and few methods of incorporating languages those languages. There was either full translations of text to a different language or single word translations.
- I found that there was an “Americanization” of different cultures; all stories that incorporated diverse cultures took place in the United States.

Conclusion

- I discovered that there are many ways to incorporate other cultures into a classroom through literature, such as through the cultural content of short stories, their illustrations, and the incorporation of other languages.
- While this textbook is lacking in its extent of cultural diversity, teachers can expand upon the stories provided and incorporate more cultures by using outside textbooks and expanded lessons on each culture.
- Incorporating other cultures gives more students the opportunity to make cultural connections and include their own experiences.
- Teachers can create an atmosphere of acceptance throughout the classroom by incorporating diverse cultures, helping to make each student feel accepted and important.