Chapter 1
Introduction to Multicultural Literature

The United States and Canada are multicultural nations, including Europeans, Native Americans, African Americans, Latinos, and Asians. The United States and Canada also include people from different religious groups such as Christian, Jewish, and Muslim. A heightened sensitivity to the needs of all people has led to the realization that literature plays a considerable role in the development of understanding across cultures.

The school-age population of minority children is increasing rapidly. This rapid change makes the understanding of and ability to use multicultural literature even more necessary. For example, Sabrina Tavernise (2011) reports that America's population of white children will be in the minority during this decade. She states, "The Census Bureau had originally forecast that 2023 would be the tipping point for the minority population under the age of 18. But rapid growth among Latinos, Asians, and people of more than one race has pushed it earlier to 2019" (p. A14). Don Van Natta, Jr. (2011) reports that the Latino population in Orange County, Florida, jumped 84 percent since the last census, while Jennifer Medina (2011) states that one-third of the population in Orange County, California, is Latino and one-fifth of the county is Asian.

To aid in developing understandings of other cultures, many educators and researchers emphasize the need for high-quality multicultural literature. Hazel Rochman (1993) states the need for multicultural literature very well when she concludes: "The best books break down borders. They surprise us—whether they are set close to home or abroad. They change our view of ourselves; they extend that phase 'like me' to include what we thought was foreign and strange" (p. 9). This changing view of ourselves is especially important to researchers who are investigating minority children's responses to literature. For example, M. Liaw (1995), after analyzing Chinese children's responses to Chinese children's books, called for more cultural sensitivity in the stories and a need for researching children's responses to literature. Grice and Vaughn (1992), following research in which they analyzed responses to African American literature, also identified the need for culturally conscious literature.

Rena Lewis and Donald Doorlag (1995) present the following reasons for developing multicultural education:

1. Commonalities among people cannot be recognized unless differences are acknowledged.
2. A society that interweaves the best of all its cultures reflects a truly mosaic image.
3. Multicultural education can restore cultural rights by emphasizing cultural equality and respect.
4. Students can learn basic skills while also learning to respect cultures; multicultural education need not detract from basic education.
5. Multicultural education enhances the self-concepts of all students because it provides a more balanced view of U.S. society.
6. Students must learn to respect others.

Christina P. DeNicolo and Maria E. Franquiz (2006) recommend developing literature discussions that allow students to discuss the literature by using their life experiences as linguistic and cultural tools to help them understand the selections. Renea Arnold and Nell Colburn (2007), early-childhood specialists and librarians, recommend that non-English speakers have fun with their first language through songs, books, rhymes, family stories, and word games. They conclude: “The most important message we can share with parents is to embrace your native language and celebrate your culture—you children will flourish!” (p. 33). Critics of literature for children and young adults maintain that readers should be exposed to multicultural literature that heightens respect for the individuals, as well as the contributions and values, of cultural minorities.

Positive multicultural literature has been used effectively to help readers identify cultural heritages, understand sociological change, respect the values of minority groups, raise aspirations, and expand imagination and creativity. This author has found that multicultural literature and activities related to the literature also improves reading scores and improves attitudes among students from varying cultures. When the literature and literature-related activities are part of the curriculum, and when adults know how to select this literature and develop strategies to accompany the literature, they encourage students to see commonalities and value in literature different from their own culture (Norton, 1981, 1984, 1990, 2001). In contrast, merely placing the literature in a classroom or a library without subsequent interaction does not change attitudes.

The importance of multicultural literature is shown in the summer reading programs required of students entering many colleges. Tamar Lewin (2007) reports that a survey of 100 college programs identified the types of reading required. For example, many reading lists deal with diversity, especially multicultural encounters, global understanding, political turmoil in the Middle East, and the rift between rich and poor in the United States. Lewin quotes several college administrators who express the importance of such reading. An administrator from the University of Florida wants books that show that “one person can make a difference” (p. C13) and the president of the University of Vermont describes this reading as “an opportunity to voyage together on the sea of thought” (p. C13). An opportunity for this voyage of discovery is also the goal of the literature discussed in this textbook.

Although we can find numerous authorities who identify the need for multicultural literature, the selection of literature that is of both high literary quality and culturally authentic is a formidable task. The tasks involved in the process are enormous. Universities are beginning to require that students in education, library science, and English take courses that focus on choosing, analyzing, evaluating, and effectively using multicultural literature. Library selection committees, university professors, public school teachers, librarians, and administrators must all become involved in this process of evaluating and choosing multicultural literature.

An example of the complexity of the problems facing the collection of multicultural literature is emphasized when we consider the evaluation of Native American literature. When developing the Native American collection, librarians and educators must meet the basic requirements for students, scholars, and general readers who are interested in the study of Native American people, their culture, and their literature. They must also, however, be equally concerned
with the quality and authenticity of the literature and reference materials. A special sensitivity is required when approaching the selection of materials, the categorizing of the materials, and the possible issues related to those selections. A case in point is *The Education of Little Tree*, written by Forrest Carter. When the book was reissued in 1991, it received that year’s American Booksellers Association’s ABBY award, given annually to the book that booksellers most enjoyed recommending directly to customers. At this point, it was advertised as a sensitive, evocative autobiographical account of a Cherokee boyhood in the 1930s and was on the *New York Times* Best Seller list for nonfiction. After revelations about the author’s background, the book was moved from nonfiction to fiction on the same best-seller list of the *New York Times*. The book has carefully developed characterizations, historical settings, and believable conflict, but it is not an autobiography of a Cherokee boy. Instead, it is historical fiction. Such distinctions are important for scholars and students who are studying Native American literature.

In addition to the sensitivity required in selecting materials, educators are also emphasizing the moral dimensions related to sharing and discussing literature associated with various cultures. Johnston, Juhasz, Marken, and Ruiz (1998) define morality as “judgments of what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is bad. These judgments, moreover, are produced at the meeting point between personal values, beliefs, and standards, and their negotiation in social settings. Morality then crucially includes both individual and social judgments” (p. 162). Consequently, the nature of the discussions between students and adults, the questions asked, the reactions to responses, and the choices of materials to be read and discussed may reflect differences in cultural values and portray moral messages.

Johnston et al. (1998) conclude with the following advice to teachers or other adults who work in multicultural settings: “Observe classroom events carefully and reflect upon their significance while suppressing the urge to criticize or condemn. The overall message that emerges from our analysis is that what teachers do and say in class does matter—their words and their actions carry great moral weight. Teachers, unavoidably, act as moral agents; how they choose to direct this action is a crucial part of what it means to be a teacher” (p. 180). This is excellent advice for anyone who is selecting, evaluating, and using multicultural literature, especially if the literature reflects cultural values and beliefs that are different from those of the educator.

Numerous articles in newspapers and journals stress the importance of developing educational systems that allow all children to succeed. For example, David M. Herszenhorn and Susan Saulny (2005) describe how a New York City school raised literacy scores by “specifying a literacy genre to focus on each month like autobiography or mystery, and weekly skills like making inferences” (p. 30). John M. Broder (2006) reports on “[a] state deadlocks on non-English-speaking children.” Sam Dillon (2006) highlights falling achievement scores in science. Daniel Golden (2006) presents an issue associated with multicultural education when he states “[p]ublishers use quotas in images to win contracts in big states, but they may be creating new stereotypes” (p. A1). Total issues of some educational journals focus on multicultural themes. The November 2006 issue of *Language Arts* is titled “Multilingual and Multicultural: Changing the Ways We Teach.” Special features in journals frequently discuss the importance of specific types of multicultural literature or provide recommended books. For example, the October 2010 issue of *School Library Journal* includes Lauren Barack’s article “Islam in the Classroom” and the journal provides recommended “Resources for Teaching About Islam” and “SLJ’s Recommended Titles.”

### Developing a Study of Multicultural Literature

My own interest in multicultural literature as a scholarly subject began over twenty years ago when I was attending a conference on researching and writing biography. One of the speakers, a Native American author, spoke about his difficulty in researching the life of a Native American chief who lived in the 1800s. As an example of the problems he encountered, he explained how
there were three differing interpretations of the chief’s last statement given before his execution. The interpretation by a military officer was that the chief called on his people to lay down their arms and live on the reservation. A missionary translated the same message to be one in which the chief asked his people to give up their own beliefs and worship the white-man’s god. The third interpretation was given by the chief’s brother. In this version, the chief reminded his people of his accomplishments and what he would like them to remember about his life. This example illustrates the need for careful research if the author is to present an authentic viewpoint.

Shortly after this experience, I began my own research into the authenticity of the multicultural literature used with children and young adults. I also developed a university course in which students who were mostly from the fields of education, liberal arts, and library science could gain insights into multicultural literature. After several years of trying different methods for teaching the course, I developed a five-phase multicultural literature study that proceeds from ancient to contemporary literature. The sequence of study is summarized in Chart 1.1. This procedure is based partly on the one described in Franchot Ballinger’s article, “A Matter of Emphasis: Teaching the ‘Literature’ in Native American Literature Courses” (1984): he begins with a general study of the oral tradition associated with Native American folklore, extends the study to the literature from specific Native American cultures, continues with biography and

### Chart 1.1  Sequence for Studying Multicultural Literature

| Phase One: Traditional Literature (Generalizations and Broad Views) |
| --- | --- |
| **A.** | Identify distinctions among folktales, myths, and legends. |
| **B.** | Identify ancient stories that have common features and that are found in many regions. |
| **C.** | Identify types of stories that dominate a subject. |
| **D.** | Summarize the nature of oral language, the role of traditional literature, the role of an audience, and the literary style. |

| Phase Two: Traditional Tales from One Area (Narrower View) |
| --- | --- |
| **A.** | Analyze traditional myths and other story types and compare findings with those in Phase One. |
| **B.** | Analyze and identify values, beliefs, and themes in the traditional tales of one region. |

| Phase Three: Historical Nonfiction |
| --- | --- |
| **A.** | Analyze nonfiction for the values, beliefs, and themes identified in traditional literature. |
| **B.** | Compare adult autobiographies and children’s biographies (if possible). |
| **C.** | Compare information in historical documents with autobiographies and biographies. |

| Phase Four: Historical Fiction |
| --- | --- |
| **A.** | Evaluate historical fiction according to the authenticity of the conflicts, characterizations, settings, themes, language, and traditional beliefs and values. |
| **B.** | Search for the role of traditional literature in historical fiction. |
| **C.** | Compare historical fiction with autobiographies, biographies, and historical information. |

| Phase Five: Contemporary Literature |
| --- | --- |
| **A.** | Analyze the inclusion of any beliefs and values identified in traditional literature and nonfictional literature. |
| **B.** | Analyze contemporary characterization and conflicts. |
| **C.** | Analyze the themes and look for threads that cross the literature. |
autobiography, and concludes with contemporary writings. Throughout this study, he searches for the emergence of critical themes, basic symbols, and shared values that tie the ancient and contemporary literature together.

A modification of this approach proved to be the most valuable for my own students, both graduate and undergraduate, who chose to do in-depth studies of African/African American, Asian/Asian American, Latino, Native American, Jewish, or Middle Eastern literature or to develop instructional units to be used with children.

As you read this book and conduct your own research, you will discover that the literature is discussed in a way that focuses on a five-phase approach. The conclusion of each chapter includes a section titled “Involving Children in _____ Literature,” with the blank filled with the name of the culture covered in that chapter. These sections provide suggestions showing some of the ways that the literature from various cultures may be used with children and young adult audiences.

### Five-Phase Approach for the Study of Multicultural Literature

#### Phase One

This phase is a broad introduction to the ancient myths, legends, and folktales of a culture. The literature, discussions, and assignments encourage students to understand the nature of the oral language in storytelling and to appreciate the role of oral tradition in transmitting the culture, the philosophy, and the language of the people.

**Activities for Phase One.** Identify the ancient myths, legends, and folktales from a culture. Find the commonalities among them and identify those that are found in different regions within the cultural group. Also identify the types of stories that dominate, the characteristics of the traditional literature, and variants of the same tale. Consider the history of the recording of the tales and problems that the interpretations and translations created. Finally, summarize the broad generalizations and understandings: What did you learn about the people, their belief and value systems, and their language?

#### Phase Two

This phase narrows the study to the ancient myths, legends, and folktales from one specific area. For example, this may involve the study of traditional literature from Native Americans of the Great Plains or the Southwest or the Inuit; tracing African tales from West Africa to southern plantations in the United States, or comparing tales from the Aztec or Inca or Latino cultures to the tales of the Hispanic Southwest. The literature, discussions, and assignments encourage students to consider how the generalizations from Phase One apply to one specific segment of a wider culture, how and why the literature may diverge from the generalizations, and what traditional values are reflected in the literature.

**Activities for Phase Two.** For one specific group or area, identify examples of ancient myths, legends, and folktales. Look for the characteristics and the story types that arose out of the study during Phase One. Identify stories that reflect differences from the characteristics identified in Phase One and consider any reasons for the differences. Comparative assignments are excellent ways to help students analyze literature. Identify examples of stories that reflect interference of an alien culture or changes that resulted because people were forced from their homelands: What are the changes? What might have caused these changes? Finally, summarize the philosophy, values, beliefs, and literary styles of the specific people as reflected in their myths, legends, and folktales.

#### Phase Three

This phase involves study of nonfiction selections such as biographies, autobiographies, and informational literature of one group of people or culture. The literature, discussions, and assignments should encourage students to understand the early experiences
and the social and political history of the specific people. This is an opportunity to verify the beliefs, values, and traditions identified in Phase One and Phase Two and to evaluate the accuracy of literature by comparing biographies, autobiographies, and informational writing.

Activities for Phase Three. Search for evidence that the philosophy, values, and beliefs depicted in myths, legends, and folktales are also depicted in biographies and autobiographies. Do the values, beliefs, and philosophies appear to be authentic? Use nonfiction informational texts to evaluate the authenticity of biographies. You may even be able to use autobiographies to evaluate the authenticity of both informational texts and biographies. If possible, compare an adult autobiography with a juvenile biography written about the same character. Or compare an adult biography with juvenile biographies that are written about the same character. What are the similarities and the differences? Evaluate the authenticity of the literature. Finally, summarize the historical happenings that influenced the culture and the people. Identify the literature that accurately presents this history.

The nonfiction selections in Phase Three encourage students of all ages to become what Marc Aronson (2007) calls detectives. As detectives, the students go from investigating what they know or they can easily discover about a people, such as geography, chronology, clothes, weapons, and available food, to discovering things they may not know, such as what a people believe and how they think about and experience the world. According to Aronson, fact checking is crucial because it allows readers to fill in the missing pieces about a people and their culture. By conducting this type of investigation, readers travel in time and see the world through the eyes of a culture that may not be known to them.

Phase Four
This phase is a study of historical fiction selections based on characters from the specific culture or on interactions between the people and another cultural group. The literature, discussions, and assignments encourage students to use the background information gained during the previous readings and discussions to evaluate the authenticity of historical fiction.

Activities for Phase Four. Analyze historical fiction for authenticity of settings, credibility of conflicts, and believability of characterizations, as well as for authenticity of the presentation of traditional beliefs, for the appropriateness of theme, and for the effectiveness of the author's style.

Phase Five
Phase Five is a study of contemporary literature including realistic fiction, poetry, biography, and autobiography. The literature, discussions, and activities encourage students to search for continuity among traditional literature, nonfiction, historical fiction, and contemporary writings and to consider the themes, values, and conflicts that emerge in contemporary writings.

Activities for Phase Five. Search for any continuity within the literature as the literature proceeds from ancient to contemporary. Search for images, themes, values, style, and sources of conflict in writings by contemporary authors who are members of the group. Compare contemporary literature written for adult and juvenile
audiences. Compare contemporary literature written by members of the group with contemporary literature that focuses on the group but is written by authors who are not members of the group.

University students find it helpful to detail some of their findings in chart form before they summarize their discoveries about the literature. They also find these charts to be extremely helpful when they are evaluating the authenticity of the literature. For example, you may find Chart 1.2 to be helpful in your own research.

Each of the following chapters includes examples of various assignments or research developed by students. There are also excerpts from the summaries of each phase of the literature developed by students.

**Authenticating the Literature: A Summary**

As can be inferred from this discussion, authenticity is very important in the selection of literature that depicts the values, beliefs, and cultural backgrounds of various groups. Marc Aronson (2007) warns that history is getting to know the language, customs, and culture of a people. He concludes, “Fact checking is crucial because it is pretty easy to get history wrong” (p. 31). The need for accuracy and authenticity is emphasized in numerous articles about multicultural literature. For example, two articles by Betsy Hearne emphasize the importance of authenticity in picture books. In “Cite the Source: Reducing Cultural Chaos in Picture Books, Part One” (1993a), Hearne states,

How do you tell if a folktale in picture-book format is authentic, or true to its cultural background? What picture books have met the challenge of presenting authentic folklore for children? These two questions, which dominated a recent program at the Harold Washington Library in Chicago, are

### Chart 1.2 Chart for Studying Multicultural Literature

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<th>Phase One</th>
<th>Phase Two</th>
<th>Phase Three</th>
<th>Phase Four</th>
<th>Phase Five</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Examples</strong></td>
<td>Characteristics and types of folklore</td>
<td>Values and beliefs</td>
<td>Values and beliefs from Phases One and Two</td>
<td>Continuity and changes within literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cultural knowledge gained</strong></td>
<td>Commonalities, characteristics, and story types</td>
<td>Differences from Phase One</td>
<td>Historical happenings that influenced culture</td>
<td>Images, themes, values, style</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beliefs and values of the people</strong></td>
<td>Interference of alien culture</td>
<td>Authenticity of historical information</td>
<td>Traditional values, beliefs, and behaviors</td>
<td>Sources of conflict</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Variants, interpretations, notes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Comparisons between writings of members and nonmembers of group</td>
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How do you tell if a folktale in picture-book format is authentic, or true to its cultural background? What picture books have met the challenge of presenting authentic folklore for children? These two questions, which dominated a recent program at the Harold Washington Library in Chicago, are
especially pressing in light of our growing national concern about multicultural awareness. And they generate even broader questions: How can an oral tradition survive in print? How do children’s books pass on—and play on—folklore? (p. 22)

In her second article, “Respect the Source: Reducing Cultural Chaos in Picture Books, Part Two” (1993b), Hearne discusses the importance of establishing cultural authority, citing the sources for folklore, and training adults who select and interact with the literature. She concludes her article with the following statements:

We can ask for source citations and more critical reviews; we can compare adaptations to their printed sources (interlibrary loan works for librarians as well as their patrons) and see what’s been changed in tone and content; we can consider what context graphic art provides for a story; we can make more informed selections, not by hard and fast rules, but by judging the balance of each book. . . . We can, in short, educate ourselves on the use and abuse of folklore at an intersection of traditions. (p. 37)

Hearne’s concerns about cultural authenticity are valid with any of the genres of literature. After reading this book and critically evaluating the literature discussed in the various chapters, you will be able to make critical decisions about choosing and evaluating the literature more effectively. Authenticating various examples of multicultural literature is one of the favorite assignments of both my undergraduate and graduate students. It has also been shown to be a favorite assignment when used with schoolchildren. Or like many of my students who express their own desires, you will be able to write your own stories that authentically depict a cultural group.

A Process to Use to Authenticate a Book

It is difficult to teach about a culture if the information in the book is not accurate for that culture. As you consider the five phases for reviewing the authenticity of books from varying cultures or one culture, you will want to consider using the following approach, based on Altick and Fenstermaker’s *The Art of Literary Research* (1993). The method has been modified for use with students at all levels. It works especially well for authenticating historical fiction, biography, and informational literature.

Categories for evaluating literature—geographical and social settings, values and beliefs, political ideologies, major events, themes, major conflicts, summary of reactions and responses—have been placed in question format to help younger students conduct their authentication. Questions help children critique literature as a way to authenticate what they read. Also notice that these questions provide an excellent outline to aid students in a writing activity as they respond to the various questions. (The categories are shown in depth later, as we consider the authentication of literature in various chapters.)

1. What are the geographical and social settings for the book, and are they authentic? Students should use nonfictional sources to evaluate this area. Pictures found in sources such as *National Geographic* are especially good for authenticating geographical settings.
2. What are the values and beliefs of the people in the book, and are they authentic?
3. What are the major events that make up the plot of the story? Are they possible for the time period and the culture?
4. What are the major conflicts in the book, and are they authentic for the time period?
5. What are the major themes, and are they found in other literature written about the time period or the people?

Ask the students to develop their own reasons for reading a book that is authentic. Why would they prefer not to read an inauthentic book? Ask them to consider the personal
consequences if they accept as true a book that is not authentic. They may choose to add authenticity questions to the ones here or to change these questions as desired.

**Activities for Involving Children in the Study of Literature**

In addition to the activity sections that use the five-phase approach for the study of the literature, the literature studies in each chapter of this text include ideas for “Involving Children in the Study of That Literature.” For example, each of the “Involving” sections includes an activity that focuses on storytelling and on the authentication of the literature. In addition, each includes ideas for developing writing connections with the literature, visualizing the culture and the literature through illustrated texts, and developing an analytical reading of a literature selection.

**Writing Connections with the Literature**  
A report from the National Commission on Writing in America’s Schools and Colleges (http://www.writingcommission.org) identifies writing as the neglected “R” and calls for a writing revolution. The report recommends that writing should be the center of the school agenda. The report indicates the current neglect of writing with the following statistics:

1. Most fourth-grade students spend less than three hours a week writing. (This is 15% of the time they spend watching television.)
2. Nearly 60% of high school seniors do not write a three-page paper as often as once a month for their English teachers.
3. Seventy-five percent of seniors never receive a writing assignment in history or social studies.

At grades 4, 8, and 12, about one in five students produces completely unsatisfactory prose, about 50% meet basic requirements, and only one in five rate proficient in writing. Unfortunately, the report shows that more than 50% of college freshman are unable to produce papers relatively free of language errors or to analyze arguments or synthesize information.

The vice chair of the commission, Arlene Ackerman, summarized the need for a writing revolution very clearly when she stated, “Writing is how we teach students complex skills of synthesis, analysis, and problem solving. These skills will serve them well throughout life” (2003, p. 4).

The literature discussed and the activities related to the literature developed in this text provide many opportunities for students to synthesize, analyze, and solve problems through written papers and arguments. Consequently, this text highlights ways that writing may be used with the literature. Many of the activities such as authenticating the literature are natural methods for adding writing to the curriculum.

**Visualizing the Literature**  
Multicultural literature includes many contexts that may be outside students’ experiences. Consequently, using illustrated texts and encouraging students to visualize what is written in texts that do not include illustrations are two very important techniques for increasing comprehension of the texts.

Anne Nielsen Hibbing and Joan L. Rankin-Erickson (2003) state, “In our work with struggling readers we have found that the use of sketches, illustrations, picture books, and movies provides students with information on which to build internal images, by supporting students with essential elements necessary for responding to the text” (p. 769). In addition, these authors recommend teaching students to create their own images on the television screens in their minds as they read.

Although Hibbing and Rankin-Erickson are especially interested in using visual imagery with lower-ability readers, the technique is an important tool for all readers, especially as they...
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are trying to visualize and understand a setting or a situation outside of their experiences. These authors recommend discussions that check students' ability to create visual images, modeling imagery strategies with students, drawing pictures to clarify texts, using students' drawings to help them make predictions, and encouraging students to authenticate the accuracy or inaccuracy of the illustrations.

As we proceed through this multicultural literature text, we will discover many occasions to use illustrated picture books and to create images for nonillustrated books. The writing in many of the award-winning books provides considerable opportunities to use visual imagery to imagine settings, conflicts, and character analysis. These range from the images of a segregated South created in the writing of Christopher Paul Curtis in *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* to the setting in 1847 as an Ojibwa girl experiences the seasons of the year and many traditional cultural experiences in Louise Erdrich's *The Birchbark House*. The settings and conflicts generated by Nancy Farmer in *The House of the Scorpion* are especially detailed for a setting along the Mexican-American border. The customs and settings associated with the Hindu culture of India are vividly depicted in Gloria Whelan's *Homeless Bird*. The World War II setting for two characters, one a Jewish refugee boy and one an American girl living near the refuge camp in Oswego, New York, in Miriam Bat-Ami's *Two Suns in the Sky*, provides many opportunities to visualize a historical fiction setting. The setting of the Cholistan Desert in Pakistan is developed by Suzanne Fisher Staples in *Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind*. Current news reports include numerous depictions of the places in the text. Students can compare the television reports with the settings described by Staples.

Analytical Reading of Literature Selections. The literature discussed in the various chapters in this text, especially the literature written for students in the middle- and upper-elementary grades and in middle school, frequently includes complex issues and concepts that require in-depth reading and analysis of the books. This type of analysis and understanding requires adult assistance and modeling if the students are to comprehend what they read.

In the 1970s, Mortimer J. Adler and Charles Van Doren wrote the best-selling *How to Read a Book: The Classic Guide to Intelligent Reading* (1972). This guide includes steps students can use when outlining a book and later when applying informed criticism of the book. This approach is currently being used by university students in this author's classes. It is very helpful for both university students and for teaching students in the upper-elementary grades. Each of the “Involving Children in _____” sections presented in this book includes an example of how the approach may be applied to literature from that culture. As you read and analyze each of the following stages, identify how the technique increases both analytical and critical reading abilities. Also notice how the approach increases and improves student involvement in discussion and writing about a book.

These are the stages in analytical reading identified by Adler and Van Doren:

**First Stage: Rules for Finding What a Book Is About**

1. Classify the book by subject matter (genre of literature and characteristics of that genre).
2. Briefly state what the book is about (summarizing).
3. List and outline the major parts of the book.
4. Define the problems the author has tried to solve.

**Second Stage: Rules for Interpreting a Book's Content**

5. Identify and interpret the author's key words (vocabulary).
6. Identify and discuss the author's most important sentences.
A Featured Book for Discussions with Older Readers and Young Adults

Each chapter includes an in-depth discussion of a book that is appropriate for young adult readers. Many of these books include issues, plot developments, and themes that are more appropriate for discussions with older readers. For example, the African American chapter discusses *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing: Traitor to the Nation* by M. T. Anderson. This National Book Award winner is a historical novel set during the Revolutionary War. The hero is a slave who is caught up in the contradictory beliefs demonstrated by the Sons of Liberty. They fight for equality and freedom from English rule, but they own slaves, consider them property, and frequently treat them cruelly.

The featured book in the Native American chapter is Joseph Bruchac’s *Code Talker*. This fictional story is based on the experiences of Ned Begay, who was one of the Navajo marines who used his native language to develop an unbreakable code that helped defeat the Japanese during World War II. The novel includes both interesting facts about the conflicts during World War II and the cultural heritage and values of the Navajo people. One of Bruchac’s major themes is that it is important to respect other languages and cultures.

*Red Hot Salsa: Bilingual Poems on Being Young and Latino in the United States*, edited by Lori Marie Carlson, is the featured book in the Latino chapter. This collection of poems written in both English and Spanish presents experiences, feelings, and issues that face Latinos today. The collection includes poems both by well-known poets such as Gary Soto and also by Latino students who are attending New York City public schools.

The featured book in the Asian chapter is David Patneaude’s *Thin Wood Walls* set in the Tule Lake Relocation Camp in California during World War II. The author develops both credibility for the time period and themes similar to many books with like settings. Book discussions may relate to how the author-developed themes such as prejudice and hatred are destructive forces and moral obligations and personal conscience are strong forces.

*The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak is the featured book in the Jewish chapter. The book, narrated by Death, is set in Nazi Germany. The theme, books have the power to nourish the soul, is highlighted as the protagonist collects books before Nazi burnings, comforts neighbors as she reads orally from the books during bombing raids, and reads to a Jewish man who is hidden in her basement. As students read the book, they may trace the development of the author’s powerful themes and discuss why the author develops the conflicts as seen through Death’s viewpoint.

The featured book for the Middle Eastern chapter is Kathy Henderson’s *Lugalbanda: The Boy Who Got Caught Up in a War*. This legend was originally translated from ancient Sumerian fables believed to be between 4,000 and 5,000 years old. This book could easily accompany a study of traditional literature. The language has the cadence of an oral story, the format follows that from many traditional tales, and the themes are found in tales from other locations that focus on cultural heroes. Two themes are important for discussions and comparisons. First, a hero must keep promises. Second, peace is the ultimate goal of any cultural hero.

7. Know the author’s arguments by identifying them in the text.
8. Determine which of the problems the author has solved and which have not been solved.
9. Do not begin critiquing the book until you have completed your interpretation (suspend judgment until you understand the text).
10. When you disagree with the author, do so reasonably.
11. Respect the differences between knowledge and personal opinion by giving reasons for critical judgments.

Share each of these stages with upper-elementary students or in your college classes. Why are these stages critical? What do you discover about the book by analyzing it according to each
stage? Why is the approach identified as an approach for fostering and improving analytical reading? Why is analytical reading important? This approach to analytical reading is developed in each of the chapters using an award-winning book, such as the Latino literature chapter that focuses on Nancy Farmer’s *The House of the Scorpion*, a Newbery Honor recipient and a National Book Award winner.

## Survival

This fourth edition of *Multicultural Children’s Literature: Through the Eyes of Many Children* includes a new section in each of the chapters. This section focuses on the skills, strategies, values, and beliefs that allow people in that culture to survive. When considering survival there are many types of survival. For example, women and minorities may need to overcome prejudices to survive. There may be survival following physical accidents or emotional survival as characters overcome person against self or society conflicts. Or, the survival may result as characters are stranded in nature. These characters frequently rely on survival techniques and strategies that are embedded deep within their cultures or they may rely on survival strategies that are common to all cultures.

Survival is the focus in both news articles and in books written for young adults. Newspaper articles in 2011 stressed survival following earthquakes, nuclear-power meltdowns, and tsunamis. Or, survival may be closer to home as students try to survive bullying (Parker-Pope, 2011). An article describing the trapped miners in Chile has the headline: “With Life Skills and Leadership, Trapped Miners Forge a Refuge” (Barrionuevo, 2010, p. A1). In the article, the author stresses how one of the miners used his nursing background, while others relied on leadership skills or prayed and read the Bible. The power of nature to help with personal survival is emphasized in Matt Richtel's “Outdoors and Out of Reach, Studying the Brain” (2010, p. A1). Survival may also be important for political careers as expressed in Kirk Johnson's “Message of Survival Won Denver Race for Mayor” (2011, p. A15).

The books discussed under survival in this text are among the strongest for literary quality and frequently depict the harsh realities experienced by people within the culture. Some books are historical fiction, while others are set in contemporary times with contemporary issues that must be at least partially resolved if the characters are to survive. A brief introduction to some of the books that will be discussed within the chapter reveals the range of materials.

One of the books discussed in the African American chapter is Laurie Halse Anderson’s *Chains*, both a National Book Award finalist and the winner of the Scott O’Dell Award for Historical Fiction. In a story set in New York during the Revolutionary War, the character Isabel, who is a slave, discovers that while her body may be in chains, no one can chain her soul. The author develops strong survival techniques as Isabel realizes that she must have a map or plan for her life if she is to survive.

The Native American chapter includes a contemporary realistic fiction book that is a Boston Globe and a National Book Award winner for young adult literature, Sherman Alexie’s *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. As the main character faces prejudice and problems when he leaves the reservation to attend an all-white school, he discovers that it is important to develop self-esteem and to search for a dream. He also realizes that his grandmother’s values of forgiveness, love, and tolerance are all essential for his own survival.

The Latino chapter includes an autobiography, Francisco Jimenez’s *Reaching Out*. His books have won both a Pura Belpré Honor and a Tomas Rivera Mexican American Children’s Book Award. This true story emphasizes how the son of illegal immigrants worked hard for the opportunity to go to college, developed a strong work ethic, relied on his hope and faith to develop a sense of personal responsibility, and retained pride in his heritage.
The Asian chapter includes a 2010 Newbery Honor, Grace Lin's *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon*. The author's style in this book relies on folktales. Each time Minli asks a question, the author tells a folktale to answer the question. Consequently, readers gain an understanding of the cultural values and beliefs through the Chinese folktales as well as survival techniques such as a belief that nothing is impossible and the importance of curiosity, patience, wisdom, and happiness.

The Jewish chapter includes a heartwarming true story, Louise Borden’s *The Journey That Saved Curious George: The True Wartime Escape of Margret and H. A. Rey*. This survival story tells how a skillful talent for writing and illustrating about a mischievous little monkey rescued the Reys by convincing the police that they were not spies but authors of books for children. The characterizations reveal the importance of spunk, fearlessness, and retaining a dream even in times of the worst peril. Would you, like the Reys, bike across Europe to escape capture in WWII?

The Middle Eastern chapter also includes a book about responses during wartime. Deborah Ellis's *Children of War: Voices of Iraqi Refugees* is a true account of the author's interviews with children. These interviews include responses to current social conditions as well as emotional and physical reactions to wartime conditions. Now survival may include the need to join a political party when told, having no choice when instructed to join the military, and being careful about trusting people. There are also more positive survival skills such as retaining one's religion, thinking about a future in which there is peace and freedom, and relying on music and stories to help in times of fear. A strong survival theme develops through these interviews as many individuals conclude that the people of Iraq must be responsible for making their own lives better.

*What Would _________ Do?* is a new section added to the “Involving Children” portion of each chapter. Teachers and librarians have asked for more opportunities to involve students in current events. The “Survival” sections emphasize how the characters in many of the books use skills and strategies that are important within their cultures. This new section will ask students to use their increased knowledge of a culture to consider how an influential member of the culture might respond to a current issue or crisis. For example, one of the books discussed in the Asian chapter is Kimiko Kajikawa’s *Tsunami!*. This book is based on the actions of a real person who in 1854 set his own rice harvest on fire to warn the people of a coming tsunami. A news article published in 2011 is titled “Japanese City's Desperate Cry Resonates Around the World” (Fackler, 2011). After reading articles such as this one, students may consider how the Japanese hero from 1854, Hamaguchi Gohei, might respond to the mayor of this Japanese city in 2011.

As part of an African American study, students might consider how Martin Luther King, Jr., would respond to current racial issues or how Muhammad would respond to fighting in the Middle East. As part of the Asian culture students could identify current news articles and consider what advice might be given by Confucius, Buddha, or the Dalai Lama.

International issues related to each cultural group are found in any major newspaper. For example, a search of the front page of the “International” news section for two days of the *New York Times* resulted in the following articles that could be used in such an activity: Jeffrey Gettleman’s “U.N. Officials Warn of a Growing ‘Panic’ in Central Sudan as Violence Spreads” (p. A5), Neil MacFarquhar’s “Social Media Help Keep the Door Open to Sustained Dissent Inside Saudi Arabia” (p. A5), Ethan Bronner’s “Israel Warns of Using Force if New Flotilla Heads to Gaza” (p. A4) and Alexei Barrionuevo’s “Plan for Hydroelectric Dam in Patagonia Outrages Chileans” (p. A4). Likewise, national news provides many issues related to African Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, Jewish people, and people from the Middle East who live in America.

Encouraging students to relate themes, conflicts, and characterizations in books to current national and international news helps them apply their learning to current problems. It also leads to the development of higher cognitive skills as they learn to read, discuss, criticize, and evaluate what they read and hear.
REFERENCES