

The Gems of Multicultural Children's Literature

The target audience for “The Gems of Multicultural Children’s Literature” will be preservice and practicing elementary (Kindergarten-5th grade) teachers.

The purpose is to expose educators to a variety of children’s literature from ethnic groups such as African American, Arabic, Asian, Hispanic, and Indigenous. The presentation will highlight and discuss the cultural traditions and symbolism of ten children’s books with titles such as “Carmela, Full of Wishes,” “Time for Bed, Miyuki,” “My Hair is a Garden,” and many more. For example, in the story “Carmela, Full of Wishes” by Matt de la Peña, the main character, Carmela receives gold bracelets for her birthday. Throughout the story, she gets the evil eye from her brother and she thrums her bracelets at him. In the Hispanic culture, this is called “Mal de ojo” and Hispanic mothers have their children wear gold bracelets to protect them from evil. Even though this is not explicitly stated in the story, it’s important for teachers to share this information with their students. Participants will not only gain knowledge of these stories, but also a deeper knowledge of cultural diversity. The Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading Standards were passed in December of 2020 and with the adoption of these standards, preservice and practicing teachers need to understand cultural and community diversity and learn how to incorporate students’ experiences, cultures, and community resources into their instruction (www.isbe.net). Wright (2019) stated, “...reading texts that align with students’ cultural knowledge may support reading comprehension” because teachers build upon students’ funds of knowledge which leads to deeper comprehension and understanding (p. 5). Incorporating multicultural literature in elementary classrooms engages students in the learning process while appreciating student diversity. This presentation will celebrate diverse children’s literature.

Wright, T. S. (2019). Reading to learn from the start: The power of interactive read-alouds. *American Educator*, 42(4), 4-8.