

The background of the cover is a light yellow-green gradient. Scattered across the cover are several stylized, light green leaf motifs, each consisting of a small stem with two leaves. These motifs are positioned in the top left, top center, top right, middle right, bottom center, and bottom left areas.

# MULTICULTURAL AMERICAN HISTORY THROUGH CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

---

**Deborah A. Ellermeier, Kay A. Chick**

 *Greenwood*  
PUBLISHING GROUP

# **Multicultural American History Through Children's Literature**

**Deborah A. Ellermeyer, Ed.D.  
Kay A. Chick, Ed.D.**

**Teacher Ideas Press**  
A division of Reed Elsevier Inc.  
361 Hanover Street  
Portsmouth, NH 03801-3912  
www.teacherideaspress.com

*Offices and agents throughout the world*

© 2003 by Deborah A. Ellermeyer and Kay A. Chick

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without permission in writing from the publisher, except by a reviewer, who may quote brief passages in review. Reproducible pages may be copied for classroom and educational programs only.

The author and publisher wish to thank those who have generously given permission to reprint borrowed material:

*National Standards for History* published by the National Center for History in the Schools, 1996. Used by permission of the National Center for History in the Schools.

#### **Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Ellermeyer, Deborah.

Multicultural American history through children's literature / Deborah A. Ellermeyer, Kay A. Chick.  
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 1-56308-955-6

1. Pluralism (Social sciences)—United States—History—Study and teaching (Elementary) 2. Ethnology—United States—History—Study and teaching (Elementary) 3. United States—Ethnic relations—Study and teaching (Elementary) 4. United States—History—Study and teaching (Elementary) 5. Children's literature, American—Study and teaching (Elementary) 6. Pluralism (Social sciences) in literature—Study and teaching (Elementary)—United States. 7. Children—Books and reading—United States. I. Chick, Kay A. II. Title.

E184.A1 E396 2003

372.89'044—dc21

2003013593

*Editor:* Suzanne Barchers  
*Production Coordination:* Angela Laughlin  
*Typesetter:* Westchester Book Group  
*Cover design:* Joni Doherty  
*Manufacturing:* Steve Bernier

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper

07 06 05 04 03 VP 1 2 3 4 5

With love and best wishes to my brothers and sisters: Ronald Sanko, Doug Sanko, Pam Salsgiver, Dan Sanko, and Sandy Beck. A special congratulations to my nephew, Deo Beck, on his high school graduation.—DAE

This book is dedicated to my family, Bill, Tyler, and Tim. Special thanks go to Tyler for his computer assistance.—KAC

*This page intentionally left blank*

# Contents

**Introduction** .....ix

    Purpose .....ix

    Rationale .....ix

    Benefits for Teachers .....xi

    Tips on Using the Book with Students .....xii

    References .....xiii

**Chapter 1: Coming to America** .....1

*Building a New Land: African-Americans in Colonial America* .....1

*Nickommoh! A Thanksgiving Celebration* .....3

*The First Thanksgiving* .....7

**Chapter 2: The Old West** .....13

*I Have Heard of a Land* .....13

*Black Cowboy, Wild Horses* .....16

*Voices of the Alamo* .....18

**Chapter 3: The American Revolution** .....27

*Sybil’s Night Ride* .....27

*The American Revolution* .....29

*Come All You Brave Soldiers: Blacks in the Revolutionary War* .....31

**Chapter 4: Slavery .....37**

*Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt* .....37

*If You Traveled on the Underground Railroad* .....40

*Ebony Sea* .....42

**Chapter 5: Freedom Fighters .....49**

*The Story of Ruby Bridges* .....49

*A Picture Book of Rosa Parks* .....51

*If You Lived at the Time of Martin Luther King* .....58

**Chapter 6: The Civil War .....63**

*Pink and Say* .....63

*Black, Blue, and Gray: African Americans in the Civil War* .....67

*Harriet Beecher Stowe: Author of Uncle Tom’s Cabin* .....70

**Chapter 7: Immigration .....75**

*Bound for America: The Forced Migration of Africans to the New World* .....75

*Coming to America: The Story of Immigration* .....78

*Journey to Ellis Island* .....81

**Chapter 8: World War II and the Holocaust .....85**

*So Far from the Sea* .....85

*Faithful Elephants: A True Story of Animals, People, and War* .....88

*A Picture Book of Anne Frank* .....90

**Chapter 9: Vietnam .....97**

*The Wall* .....97

*The Vietnam Women’s Memorial* .....99

*The Vietnam War* .....103

**Chapter 10: Women in History .....107**

*All by Herself: 14 Girls Who Made a Difference* .....107

*A Picture Book of Sojourner Truth* .....111

*Maya Angelou: Greeting the Morning* .....114

**Chapter 11: Men in History .....119**

*Duke Ellington* .....119

*More Than Anything Else* .....122

*A Picture Book of George Washington Carver* .....124

**Chapter 12: Native Americans .....129**

*Tallchief: America’s Prima Ballerina* .....129

*A Picture Book of Sacagawea* .....131

*The Legend of the Indian Paintbrush* .....133

**Appendix: National Standards for History .....137**

**Books/Standards Matrix .....139**

**Title Index .....143**

**Subject Index .....144**

**About the Authors .....146**



*This page intentionally left blank*

# Introduction

## PURPOSE

*Multicultural American History Through Children's Literature* is an integrated teacher resource book designed to provide intermediate grade level teachers (grades 3–6) with lesson ideas for the instruction of social studies/history concepts within the context of quality multicultural children's books and picture books. Many of the books and activities, however, can be easily adapted for use in a primary classroom. Each chapter provides teachers with the titles of three picture books related to various multicultural themes in American history, covering topics in history from the 1400s when the pilgrims traveled to America to the present day. This resource book provides teachers with a brief summary of each book, a listing of limited materials needed to implement lesson activities, a listing of key concepts for each area of study, and student-centered learning activities designed to develop and enhance social studies/history concepts in accordance with the most recent history standards, which are outlined and described in the *National Standards for History* (1996) (see Appendix). Also included is a matrix that will, at a glance, identify and summarize the history standards highlighted in each of the units of study. Additional book titles and poems related to the themes are included at the end of each chapter.

## RATIONALE

### *Why Teach Social Studies Concepts to Children?*

Teaching children about social studies concepts is an essential component of every well-balanced elementary curriculum. The following four reasons have been identified by the authors of the *National Standards for History* (1996) for the inclusion of social studies and history instruction at the elementary level:

1. A knowledge of social studies/history concepts connects each child with his or her roots and develops in each child a sense of personal belonging. Children need to be aware of their own personal heritage and understand how they fit into the larger global community.
2. A knowledge of social studies/history concepts allows each child to move to an informed discriminating citizenship, which is essential to foster effective participation

in democratic processes. Learning about the characteristics of good citizenship should commence during the early elementary years and continue to be developed throughout the education of every individual.

3. A knowledge of social studies/history concepts allows a society to share core values, a common memory of where it has been, and how past decisions account for present conditions. In this sense, history is the common thread that binds the past to the present and the present to the past.
4. A knowledge of social studies/history concepts is the precondition of political intelligence. In essence, informed citizens will be better able to make intelligent decisions regarding the issues that affect them and their country.

### *Why Use Multicultural Picture Books to Teach Social Studies Concepts?*

There are several advantages of using quality multicultural picture books to teach social studies concepts. The advantages are discussed briefly below.

1. Picture books can be used as a supplement to textbooks to arouse students' curiosity when a new unit of study is introduced. As a result of the colorful illustrations, intriguing characters, story format, manageable length, and understandable language, children are attracted to picture books. Consequently, picture books can effectively capture students' attention in a particular area of study.
2. Picture books can add depth to a specific topic by providing detailed information that is often missing from standard textbooks. Because of space constraints within a textbook, standard texts often present students with a very narrow view of historical concepts. Picture books expand students' knowledge and understanding of historical events and concepts.
3. Picture books can present students with alternative views and perspectives on specific historical events, which are often lacking in standard textbooks. In this way, picture books have the capability of more fully informing students of various viewpoints on any given historical event.
4. Picture books reveal history through the eyes of characters, either actual or fictional, who have lived through historical events, instead of through the eyes of biased and remote textbook authors. Students often find that the information presented in texts is presented in a detached and factual manner. History, when revealed through the eyes of people who lived through events and time periods, becomes more real and personal for the reader. Picture books present to children the human side of history that is lacking in standard texts.
5. Picture books lend themselves to presenting sometimes difficult or sensitive concepts to children in an age-appropriate and tasteful manner. Consequently, young students can learn about an event, such as the Holocaust, within the context of quality children's literature that has been specifically written for them.

### ***Criteria for Choosing Multicultural Picture Books to Use in the Teaching of Social Studies Concepts***

Farris and Fuhler (1994) have identified criteria for choosing picture books to use in the teaching of social studies concepts. Additionally, Beaty (1997) has suggested guidelines for choosing appropriate multicultural picture books. Outlined below is a list of questions to be used with each picture book that is being considered for use within the elementary social studies curriculum.

1. Are the facts presented within the text authentic?
2. Are facts and opinions clearly differentiated? Are opinions adequately supported?
3. Will the content of the picture book extend the social studies topic that is being studied?
4. Are the text and illustrations free of stereotyping?
5. Does the language or dialect show respect for the culture?
6. Is there a balance of books showing different facets of each culture?
7. Is there a variety of genres, including poetry, historical fiction, biographies, folktales and legends, and informational books?
8. Will the story, illustrations, and characters appeal to the students and is the content developmentally appropriate?
9. Are the illustrations accurate reflections of the text, the historical period, and the culture?

### **BENEFITS FOR TEACHERS**

The benefits of using the teacher resource book *Multicultural American History Through Children's Literature* are many. Several benefits are discussed below.

1. Teaching Social Studies Concepts within the Meaningful Context of Quality Multicultural Children's Picture Books

Picture books can bring social studies and history alive for young learners. Picture books can get children in touch with the human, feeling side of history. Whereas social studies texts have long been criticized for their rather dry and factual presentation of material, the colorful illustrations, readable text, and story format of picture books appeal to children. Learning about key historical events and people via a quality picture book makes learning a pleasurable and meaningful experience for students and teachers alike.

2. A Variety of Student-Centered Learning Activities to Develop and Reinforce Social Studies Concepts in Accordance with the National Standards for History.

Students learn best when they are actively engaged in the learning process. The student-centered activities provided herein are designed to involve students actively in meaningful and enjoyable learning experiences while teaching essential social studies concepts. The authors identify the national history standards each unit of study addresses.

3. Integration of Other Instructional Skill Areas within Social Studies Activities

In addition to involving students in social studies and history-related activities, this resource book provides teachers with activities that effectively integrate other areas, including: math reading; writing; oral language; listening; creative dramatics; social, environmental, and community awareness; art; creative and critical thinking; problem solving; and cooperative learning. Areas of integration are clearly delineated and specified for each learning activity included in the book.

4. Ease and Versatility of Use

*Multicultural American History Through Children's Literature* is a teacher-friendly resource book that is easy to use. It is written in a style that teachers can easily read and understand. Each unit of study is based on quality children's picture books, most of which are accessible through school book clubs. Each unit identifies the books and other limited materials necessary to complete the activities. A brief book summary is also provided. Key concepts and areas of integration, as well as history standards, are identified for each unit of study.

The lessons can be used in a variety of ways within the social studies curriculum. The book can be used effectively by teachers who use an adopted social studies textbook and by those teachers who use a more holistic, eclectic approach to instruction. Teachers using adopted social studies texts will find the book helpful in introducing social studies themes and providing supplemental information and learning activities. Teachers with more eclectic approaches to instruction will find the book a developmentally appropriate alternative to social studies texts.

Students will enjoy the selected picture books and the creative, student-centered learning activities. The variety of books, topics, and activities will maintain the interest of students in any classroom.

5. Opportunity for Authentic, Performance-based Assessment

Through the use of this teacher resource book, teachers are afforded the opportunity to assess their students' learning via the completion of a wide variety of authentic, enjoyable, performance-based tasks. The variety of ways in which students demonstrate their understanding of concepts also recognizes and applies the theory of Howard Gardner's (1993) multiple intelligences.

## TIPS ON USING THE BOOK WITH STUDENTS

1. Familiarize Self with the Picture Books in Advance of Reading to the Class

It is suggested that teachers obtain copies of the book(s) they wish to use with their students and familiarize themselves with them in advance of presenting them to the class. Since the teacher will be reading the picture books aloud to the group, only one copy of each book is required for each lesson. A pre-reading allows the teacher an opportunity to develop questions that can be used to engage listeners actively throughout the reading of the text. A pre-reading also gives the teacher an opportunity to examine closely illustrations and note points of particular interest that might be discussed with the class during the reading of the book. Finally, a pre-reading of the text helps ensure a more fluent and expressive reading in class.

## 2. Decide the Best Way to Use the Picture Books and Activities to Enhance Student Learning

The picture books and accompanying lessons contained within this teacher resource book can be used in a variety of ways. They can be used by themselves or in conjunction with an adopted social studies text. The units can be used to introduce a particular social studies topic or broaden students' understanding of concepts that have already been introduced. Teachers have the option of choosing how each unit best fits into their existing social studies curriculum.

## 3. Read the Book Aloud to the Class

In order to facilitate discussion and focus students' attention on key vocabulary and concepts, it is recommended that the teacher read the books aloud to the students. Begin the reading by giving students a purpose for listening. Ask students to make predictions throughout the book and check them for accuracy as the reading continues. Encourage students to reread the book on their own and suggest other books, which are listed at the end of each unit, on the same historical event or concept.

## 4. Prepare Lessons in Advance of Teaching

Some of the lessons require minimal teacher preparation and materials. Necessary materials should be obtained in advance of the teaching of the lesson. Teachers can easily adapt individual lessons to meet the needs of the learners in their classrooms.

## REFERENCES

- Beaty, J. *Building Bridges with Multicultural Picture Books*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1997.
- Farris, P., and C. Fuhler. "Developing Social Studies Concepts through Picture Books." *Reading Teacher* 47, no. 5 (1994):380–87.
- Gardner, H. *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. New York: Basic Books, 1993.
- National Center for History in the Schools. *National Standards for History*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996.

*This page intentionally left blank*

# CHAPTER 1

## Coming to America

### *Building a New Land: African-Americans in Colonial America*

---

Jim Haskins and Kathleen Benson  
(New York: HarperCollins, 2001)

**Book Summary:** This picture book for older readers examines the lives of African-American slaves beginning in the 1400s, with an emphasis on the colonial period in America (1607–1763). From the settling of Jamestown to the slave revolts of the 1700s, the authors share the experiences, traditions, and contributions of African Americans in a changing society.

**Key Concepts:** Slavery, colonial America

**National History Standards:** 1, 5, and 6

### Activity #1: Design a Postcard

#### Materials for Activity #1:

- Sample picture postcards from various places
- 4" × 6" blank white index cards (1 per student)
- Markers, crayons, colored pencils, and paint

**Areas of Integration:** Creative and artistic expression, oral language

After reading *Building a New Land: African-Americans in Colonial America*, ask students if they have ever gone on trips with their families. Ask if they have ever mailed a postcard to someone back home while on their trip. Following a brief discussion, show students samples of picture postcards from various places. Have students note and discuss the format of postcards.



2 • Multicultural American History Through Children’s Literature

Next, have students assume that they are slaves being brought to America. Have them design postcards to send back to relatives in their homeland that depict an aspect of their journey or new life in America. Encourage students to depict scenes detailed throughout the book.

After designing the front of the card, have students complete the back of the card by scripting messages to relatives that relate to the front illustration on their postcards. They can also create an appropriate destination name and address, as well as design a stamp for their postcards.

**Activity #2: Book Making: The Contributions of African Americans**

**Materials for Activity #2:**

- Internet access
- Library access
- Heavy 8½"×11" paper
- Spiral binding
- Crayons and markers

**Areas of Integration:** Research skills, written expression, artistic expression

After reading and discussing the chapter “African Contributions to Colonial Society,” ask students to list the contributions of African Americans in the areas of art, music, and literature and storytelling. Record students’ ideas on the chalkboard or poster board. Have students expand on the contributions mentioned in the book by researching on websites or in other books. Students may also want to interview parents, grandparents, or other adults who may know of the cultural contributions of African Americans. After the list is complete, have each student select one contribution to research in more depth. Each student will then contribute a page in a class book on the contributions of African Americans. The book could be divided into three chapters: art, music, and literature and storytelling. Each page would include an artistic representation of the contribution and a short paragraph detailing the history of the item. The book could be spiral bound and placed in the library or classroom.

**Activity #3: The Forced Immigration of African Americans**

**Materials for Activity #3:**

- Large map of the world
  - Pushpins
- Yarn or string

**Areas of Integration:** Geography skills, critical thinking