

Across Cultures: A Guide to Multicultural Literature for Children

*Kathy East
Rebecca L. Thomas*

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ACROSS CULTURES

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Across Cultures

A GUIDE TO MULTICULTURAL LITERATURE FOR CHILDREN



KATHY EAST and REBECCA L. THOMAS

Children's and Young Adult Literature Reference
Catherine Barr, Series Editor



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Preface

WHEN WE BEGAN TALKING ABOUT WRITING THIS BOOK, we wanted to build on the 30-plus years each of us has worked with children—Kathy in a public library and me in school libraries. Both of us have been involved in promoting books that present diverse experiences. Kathy has represented the American Library Association (ALA) at the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). I have worked on many minority achievement initiatives in Shaker Heights and participated in the work of the Minority Student Achievement Network (MSAN). Both of us teach college courses in literature for children and adolescents. We have attended conferences and even been speakers about using books with multicultural themes with children.

We began the selection process for *Across Cultures* by talking about books that we used. We realized there were many books that could be connected around themes or topics. Talking on the phone and sending email messages, we each made a list of books that we knew had to be included. We were amazed at how few of our books overlapped. Both of us knew that we wanted to use books that were highly regarded—and we have included many award-winning books. We also wanted to feature books that we had shared directly with children. This selection process could seem narrow; however, Kathy and I have served on award committees, served as reviewers, and published books about literature for children. We select the books for our libraries from all of the established reviewing sources. The books that we have included here are quality selections that have also been used by us with children.

We focused on books that deal with multicultural themes or diverse experiences. While we did not seek out books that featured white/European American characters, we did not exclude them. Especially when they fit with the topic being presented and extended the

discussion of the issues in the connected books. That is why a book like *Shrinking Violet* is in with *The Name Jar*, *My Name Is Yoon*, and other books about Acceptance and Self-Image.

Another selection issue that we considered was the currency of the titles. In *Across Cultures*, the focus is on relatively recent titles that are generally available in public and school libraries. Most of the selections are from the 1990s and 2000s although there are a few books from earlier years that fit in with the topic being explored. *Across Cultures* includes 465 books suitable for use with preschoolers through children in sixth grade. It is not meant to be a comprehensive list but to serve as a starting point for activities in schools and public libraries. Many of the books in one featured area could connect with books in another; the books about Civil Rights connect with those on Protests and Migrant Workers, for example. We decided that we would keep repeated titles to a minimum; as you look at the titles in this book, you will make your own connections. We hope our book serves as a guide for book discussions, library programs, classroom activities, and reading guidance.

The 465 titles in *Across Cultures* are divided into eight chapters:

Identity, Self-Image, and Learning

Families, Friends, and Neighborhoods

Traditions—Food, Art, Poetry, Music, and Celebrations

Traditions—Folktales

Exploring the Past in Diverse Communities

Knowing Today's World

Parent-Child Book Discussion Groups

Literature Circles

The first chapters are thematic while the final chapters describe two popular strategies for involving readers with books. There are topical subgroups within the first six chapters; these are listed in the contents.

Following the main body of the book are an awards appendix and five indexes: Culture/Grade Level, Author, Title, Illustrator, and Subject/Grade Level. The Culture Index gives access by specific culture or region; for example, African, African American, Asian, and so on. When

possible, a more specific culture or geographic location is appended; for example, Central American—Guatemala or African—Ghana.

Since the focus of *Across Cultures* is the element of diversity in the selected books, the culture designation indicates the main culture that is featured in the book. *The Jacket* by Andrew Clements describes the concerns that Phil, a white boy, has about his treatment of Daniel, a black student at his school. The culture designation for that book is African American as the author raises questions about racism and prejudice. Similarly, in the books about Jamaica, the focus is on Jamaica and her African American family. Some of the books in this series feature her classmates, who are from diverse backgrounds. However, since Jamaica is the focus of the series, the decision was made to designate the books as African American.

Each entry in *Across Cultures* contains the following information: author, title, illustrator (where appropriate), publisher, date, ISBN, culture, and grade level. The annotations not only describe each book but also show how it connects with some of the other books and with the topic grouping. We suggest activities and programs that would work in a school or public library setting. Often, we give examples of how the children we work with responded to the books. Along with the suggestions for using the books, there are special features such as a “Reflections” section from Kathy. When we were talking about world cultures and world literature, Kathy would remember a trip she had taken (often for ALA or IFLA) or a conference she had attended. It was a treat to hear her talk about her experiences in South Africa, Germany, Norway, and more. Including Kathy’s “Reflections” on her involvement in libraries around the world and at home may provide an incentive for other librarians and teachers to take advantage of the many opportunities to travel, visit schools and libraries, and expand their understanding of the issues that face children around the world.

Preparing *Across Cultures* has been an opportunity for us to create a resource based on our experiences with children and children’s literature. It allowed us to share ideas with each other, to make suggestions about books and activities, and to enjoy the process of our collaboration. Besides using our own libraries—Kathy at the Wood County District Public Library in Bowling Green, Ohio, and me at Onaway and

Lomond Elementary Schools in Shaker Heights, Ohio—we borrowed books from other area libraries, including the Cleveland Heights-University Heights Public Library and other member libraries of the CLEVNET system, and the SEO Library Consortium of member libraries across Ohio. We have been fortunate to have access to libraries with policies and personnel that are user-friendly, which made preparation of this book possible.

We would both like to thank our families and friends who encouraged us throughout the process. For Kathy, her husband Dennis provided support—and he relayed many messages from me and helped us keep on track. We also appreciate the support from our library and teaching colleagues, some of whom responded to parts of the manuscript with comments and suggestions.

Thank you also to Barbara Ittner, acquisitions editor at Libraries Unlimited, and to Catherine Barr, Christine McNaul, and Julia C. Miller for their editing, design, and production work.

—Rebecca Thomas, March 2007

CHAPTER ONE

Identity, Self-Image, and Learning

BELONGING, INDEPENDENCE, ACCEPTANCE, and individuality are some of the themes of the books in this chapter. As children have new experiences, they may feel uncertain and insecure. They want to be reassured and feel comfortable with the changes they in their lives. Even as they try to fit in, they want to know that others respect their differences and that they have their own identities.

The books in the chapter feature children who are growing and changing. At the beginning of the chapter are books for younger children—books that provide young readers with images and information they can connect with. Following these books are ones that focus on art, counting, the alphabet, and reading. At the end of the chapter are books for older readers that examine character development.

CONNECTING TO IMAGES IN BOOKS

YOUNG CHILDREN RESPOND TO IMAGES. Since many of them cannot read yet, they “see themselves” in the illustrations of books. They connect with books and reading by identifying with the visual presentation. *A Rainbow All Around Me*, *Shades of Black*, and many of the books by Ann Morris such as *Families* allow young children to observe the variety of colors in the world and its people. These books can be used as models to depict diverse groups of children and promote discussions about similarities and differences.

To extend the connection between the books and the readers, create a visual display using the children in your class or story group. Take photographs—you can even use the design elements and props from the featured book—and then create an exhibit that uses the words from the text with the pictures of your children. Books in the What Is . . . series, such as *What Is a Scientist?*, offer more opportunities to connect books with young children by depicting them as participants in the action. Show the children doing experiments, making predictions, and testing hypotheses. *To Be a Kid*, *Black All Around!*, and *These Hands* also encourage children to celebrate themselves and their accomplishments.

Two books—*Girls Hold Up This World* and *Keep Climbing, Girls*—could be paired together. After reading these books, children could make collages that depict some of their dreams for the future. The book *Kenya's Word* could also be the focus of a program with a connecting activity of making a word wall.

1 Ajmera, Maya, and John D. Ivanko * *To Be a Kid*

Illus. with photographs * Charlesbridge, 1999 * 0-88106-841-1
MULTICULTURAL * GRADES PRESCHOOL-1

A wonderful photoessay interprets what it means to be a kid in all reaches of the world. Family, school, play, and friends are among the topics included.

2 Hubbell, Patricia * *Black All Around!*

Illus. by Don Tate * Lee & Low, 2001 * 1-58430-048-5

AFRICAN AMERICAN * GRADES PRESCHOOL-1

A rhyming text celebrates the color black. As a young African American girl looks around, she sees the beauty of black: the letters on the page, the darkness of her pocket or a tunnel, the color of her parents' skin. She likes that clarinets, piano keys, beetles, ants, and the cozy night are all black.

3 Lehn, Barbara * *What Is a Scientist?*

Photographs by Carol Krauss * Millbrook Press, 1998 * 0-7613-1272-2

MULTICULTURAL * GRADES PRESCHOOL-1

Color photographs depict children from diverse backgrounds engaged in the scientific process. Vocabulary such as "investigate," "make predictions," and "observe" makes this a great book for language development. Other books in the series include *What Is a Teacher?* (2000), *What Is an Artist?* (2002), and *What Is an Athlete?* (2002).

4 Morris, Ann * *Families*

Photographs by Ken Heyman * HarperCollins, 2000 * 0-688-17198-2

MULTICULTURAL * GRADES PRESCHOOL-1

This book is part of the Around the World series, which includes *Houses and Homes* (1992) and *Hats, Hats, Hats* (1989). Each book features people from around the world with their families, homes, hats, and more.

Myles C. Pinkney and the Pinkney Family

Myles Pinkney is the youngest child of illustrator Jerry Pinkney and author Gloria Jean Pinkney. His brother Brian is an award-winning illustrator whose wife, Andrea Davis Pinkney, is an author, editor, and publisher. Myles Pinkney specializes in photography and his books capture images of children displaying a range of emotions. His wife, Sandra L. Pinkney, is the author of some of the books he illustrates.

For a study of Myles Pinkney, create a Pinkney family tree. Look at the content of the books from each member of the family and discuss the style of art. Many of the books reflect African American experiences. Jerry Pinkney uses watercolors and pencils for his pictures; Brian uses scratchboard and paint; Myles uses photography. Let the children experiment with each art medium.

Use *A Rainbow All Around Me* and *Shades of Black* to experiment with photography. Let the children discuss images that could accompany the poems and look at the photographs that are in the books. Then, with a digital camera, take pictures of kids in your class or library group—or have the kids take pictures—and create a display.

5 Pinkney, Sandra L. ★ *A Rainbow All Around Me*

Photographs by Myles C. Pinkney ★ Scholastic, 2002 ★

0-439-30928-X

MULTICULTURAL ★ GRADES PRESCHOOL–1

In a rainbow of colors and photographs of expressive, energetic children, the message of “colors all around us includes everything and everyone” is celebrated. The text is poetic and encourages language development. The focus on colors in the world promotes a reflection on the many colors of people. The book concludes with “We are the rainbow—YOU

and ME!" A perfect kickoff to an activity of rainbow paints and personal photographs to match!

6 Pinkney, Sandra L. * *Shades of Black: A Celebration of Our Children*

Photographs by Myles C. Pinkney * Scholastic, 2000 *
0-439-14892-8

AFRICAN AMERICAN * GRADES PRESCHOOL-1

Full-color photographs show African American children enjoying everyday activities. The brief text describes the range of skin and eye colors along with hair textures and styles.

7 Price, Hope Lynne * *These Hands*

Illus. by Bryan Collier * Hyperion, 1999 * 0-7868-0370-3

AFRICAN AMERICAN * GRADES PRESCHOOL-1

What can your hands do? They can touch, feel, and create. They can squeeze and tickle. They can pray and clap. The poetic language of this book is accompanied by Bryan Collier's collage illustrations depicting an African American girl enjoying the creativity of her hands.

8 Richards, Beah * *Keep Climbing, Girls*

Illus. by R. Gregory Christie * Simon & Schuster, 2006 * 1-4169-0264-3

AFRICAN AMERICAN * GRADES K-2

Beah Richards was a noted poet, playwright, and actor and was active in the civil rights movement. This picture book features a poem that encourages girls to reach beyond the limitations that are often placed on them. The young girl featured here climbs a tree, going higher and higher even while she is being told to come down.

6 * CONNECTING TO IMAGES IN BOOKS

The message that “the path of life goes up and up; not down” is a powerful one for readers and could lead to a discussion about opportunities.

9 Smith, Jada Pinkett * *Girls Hold Up This World*

Photographs by Donyell Kennedy-McCullough * Scholastic, 2005 * 0-439-08793-7

MULTICULTURAL * GRADES PRESCHOOL–1

Girls (and women) from diverse cultures are described as proud, confident, disciplined, kind, generous, strong, and beautiful. Groups of children could explore words that connect with boys (many of the same words as in the book) and then build a list of words and pictures showing how “Together, we” do many things.

10 Trice, Linda * *Kenya’s Word*

Illus. by Pamela Johnson * Charlesbridge, 2006 * 1-57091-887-2

AFRICAN AMERICAN * GRADES K–2

At school, Kenya sometimes daydreams and misses important information. Her teacher, Mrs. Garcia, is teaching a lesson about words. She asks the class to bring in a word about a favorite pet. Kenya is not paying attention and she brings in her pet instead—a tarantula! Mrs. Garcia helps Kenya focus and asks the class for their favorite describing word. Kenya thinks about many words and finally chooses black, which supports the concept that “black is beautiful.” This book offers opportunities to discuss words and create a word wall.

CLOTHING AND CONFIDENCE

CHILDREN ENJOY WEARING “SPECIAL” CLOTHES. In *Suki’s Kimono*, Suki feels that wearing her kimono helps her feel more confident on the first day of school. Jamela in *Jamela’s Dress* enjoys wrapping herself in the fabric for her mother’s new dress. Like Suki, Jamela experiences many emotions as she wears the fabric “dress.” She is proud of the attention she receives and dismayed when she realizes she has ruined the fabric. Her confidence is restored when more fabric is purchased. *Jingle Dancer* explores the experiences of a Native American girl, Jenna, as she prepares her outfit for the powwow. Each of these books could be the focus of a program on clothing and costumes. Children can explore garments from their own heritages.

Another theme of *Jamela’s Dress* is making a mistake, which is something that most children can relate to. They can also understand Suki’s dilemma. She chooses to wear her kimono even though she may look different. Caring adults—a parent, a teacher, a friend—help Jamela and Suki find ways to feel good about themselves. In *Jamaica and Brianna*, the two girls argue about their boots. Jamaica’s family reminds her that the boots she chose are right for her. At school, Jamaica reaches out to Brianna and their friendship is back on track.

Another clothing and confidence book is *If the Shoe Fits*. Children can identify with Rigo’s problems—he does not like the brand-new shoes his mother has given him so he puts them away. Later, when he tries to wear them, they no longer fit. Readers can discuss what they would do in this situation.

Children may enjoy other books in the series about Jamaica and Jamela, which are listed here. By reading books about familiar characters, children become more confident about their reading!

11 Daly, Niki * *Jamela’s Dress*

Illus. by the author * Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999 * 0-374-33667-9
AFRICAN—SOUTH AFRICA * GRADES K–2

Mama needs a new dress for Thelma’s wedding. Jamela looks at the beautiful fabric that Mama has bought for her dress. As the fabric dries, Jamela feels the wind blow through the fabric and it wraps around her. She walks through the town in her “dress” and the fabric

is ruined. Mama is disappointed in her and Jamela is disappointed in herself. But Archie, who took a picture of Jamela wrapped in the fabric, wins a prize for his photograph. He buys new fabric for Mama and the special dress for the wedding is completed in time. Mama even has enough fabric to make a dress for Jamela.

12 Havill, Juanita * *Jamaica and Brianna*

Illus. by Anne Sibley O'Brien * Houghton Mifflin, 1993 * 0-395-64489-5

AFRICAN AMERICAN * GRADES K-2

Jamaica, an African American girl, and her friend Brianna, an Asian American, hurt each other's feelings when each has to wear hand-me-down boots. They find a way to share their feelings and be friends again.

13 Smith, Cynthia Leitich * *Jingle Dancer*

Illus. by Cornelius Van Wright and Ying-Hwa Hu * Morrow, 2000 * 0-688-16241-X

NATIVE AMERICAN—CREEK, CHIPPEWA/ANISHINABE * GRADES 1-3

Jenna enjoys watching a videotape of Grandma Wolfe jingle dancing. This year, Jenna will dance at the powwow but she worries that her skirt will not have the special jingles. Jenna borrows rows of jingles from Great-aunt Sis, Mrs. Scott, Cousin Elizabeth, and Grandma Wolfe. Now her dress will have four rows of jingles. When the powwow begins, Jenna feels confident as she dances and she thinks of the heritage that she is continuing and the people who helped her. An Author's Note explores Jenna's native heritage (from the Muscogee [Creek] Nation and the Ojibway [Chippewa/Anishinabe] people). There is a description of jingle dancing and the costumes that are worn. A brief glossary is also included.

14 Soto, Gary * *If the Shoe Fits*

Illus. by Terry Widener * Putnam, 2002 * 0-399-23420-9

MEXICAN AMERICAN * GRADES 1–3

Rigo is the youngest in his family and he always ends up with hand-me-down clothes. On his birthday, his mother gives him brand-new shoes—loafers. He wears them around the neighborhood and is teased by an older boy. Rigo is upset and puts the shoes in his closet. Months later, when he decides to wear them again, they do not fit. At home that night, Rigo learns that his Uncle Celso has a new job. Rigo gives him the nearly new shoes. His uncle is delighted; he gives Rigo two coins from Mexico.

15 Uegaki, Chieri * *Suki's Kimono*

Illus. by Stéphane Jorisch * Kids Can Press, 2003 * 1-55337-084-8

JAPANESE AMERICAN * GRADES K–2

Suki wants to wear her *kimono* (robe) and *geta* (wooden clogs) for the first day of school. Her older sisters tell her she will not be “cool,” but Suki does not listen. Her *obāchan* (grandmother) gave her the kimono, so Suki decides to wear it and she experiences some teasing. Suki’s teacher, Mrs. Paggio, lets Suki show her kimono to the class and demonstrate a dance. Her classmates applaud her and Suki walks home knowing that it was a special day. A brief glossary explains some of the Japanese words.

More books about Jamaica and Jamela:**16 Daly, Niki * *Happy Birthday, Jamela!***

Illus. by the author * Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006 * 0-374-32842-0

AFRICAN—SOUTH AFRICA * GRADES K–2

Jamela likes the new dress that Mama and Gogo buy for her birthday, but she does not like the sturdy black shoes. She wants the

sparkly shoes. Disappointed, Jamela decides to decorate the plain shoes with glitter and beads. Mama is angry, but an artistic merchant loves the shoes and helps Jamela decorate more pairs, which they sell, earning enough money to buy the shoes Jamela really wants.

17 Daly, Niki * *What's Cooking, Jamela?*

Illus. by the author * Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004 * 0-374-35602-5
AFRICAN—SOUTH AFRICA * GRADES K-2

Jamela and Mama buy a beautiful young red chicken that they will feed so it is nice and fat for Christmas dinner. Jamela names the chicken Christmas and, of course, she becomes so attached to her chicken that she will not allow it to become their Christmas dinner. Mama gives Jamela the chicken as her Christmas present. There is a glossary of terms in the book that come from several of the languages used in South Africa.

18 Daly, Niki * *Where's Jamela?*

Illus. by the author * Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004 * 0-374-38324-3
AFRICAN—SOUTH AFRICA * GRADES K-2

Mama gets a new job and she and Jamela must move. Jamela is not happy about this; she reluctantly helps with the packing. She crawls into a packing box and falls asleep. When the truck is loaded, she cannot be found. Everyone looks for her. Finally, Jamela wakes up and crawls out of the box. There is a big going-away celebration. When they arrive at the new house, Jamela settles into her new room. There is a glossary of terms in the book which come from several of the languages used in South Africa.

19 Havill, Juanita * *Brianna, Jamaica, and the Dance of Spring*

Illus. by Anne Sibley O'Brien * Houghton Mifflin, 2002 * 0-618-07700-6
AFRICAN AMERICAN * GRADES K-2

Brianna and Jamaica both want to be the butterfly queen in the dance class recital, but the part goes to Brianna's older sister, Nikki. Both girls are disappointed, but they continue to practice and prepare. When Nikki becomes ill, Brianna is chosen to take her place.

Then Brianna becomes ill and the performance continues without a butterfly queen dance. When Nikki and Brianna feel better, Jamaica joins them as they present a recital for their families. Brianna and her Asian American family play a larger role than Jamaica and her African American family.

20 Havill, Juanita * *Jamaica and the Substitute Teacher*

Illus. by Anne Sibley O'Brien * Houghton Mifflin, 1999 * 0-395-90503-6

AFRICAN AMERICAN * GRADES K-2

Jamaica wants to please her substitute teacher, Mrs. Duval. During a spelling test, Jamaica sees Brianna's paper and copies one of the words. She knows that she has done something wrong and she does not turn in her "perfect" paper. Mrs. Duval asks Jamaica to explain, and Jamaica shamefully confesses. Mrs. Duval understands Jamaica's desire to be perfect. She reassures her and makes her feel special.

21 Havill, Juanita * *Jamaica Tag-Along*

Illus. by Anne Sibley O'Brien * Houghton Mifflin, 1989 * 0-395-49602-0

AFRICAN AMERICAN * GRADES K-2

When Ossie goes to the park to play basketball, his sister Jamaica follows him. He and his friends tell her to stop bothering them. Later, when Jamaica is playing in the park, she is bothered by a toddler named Berto. Jamaica lets Berto play with her and then they let Ossie join them.

22 Havill, Juanita * *Jamaica's Blue Marker*

Illus. by Anne Sibley O'Brien * Houghton Mifflin, 1995 * 0-395-572036-2

AFRICAN AMERICAN * GRADES K-2

Jamaica loves to draw. During one art period at school, her teacher asks Jamaica to share her markers with Russell. Russell just makes blue scribbles on his paper and when Jamaica asks him about it, he makes blue scribbles on her drawing. Jamaica is angry and hurt. Later, she learns that Russell is moving. She wonders if he is upset

about it and has been acting out. On his last day, Jamaica gives Russell her blue marker to take to his new school.

23 Havill, Juanita * *Jamaica's Find*

Illus. by Anne Sibley O'Brien * Houghton Mifflin, 1986 * 0-395-39376-0

AFRICAN AMERICAN * GRADES K-2

When Jamaica finds a stuffed toy at the park, she wants to keep it. She realizes that she should return it to the lost and found. After she returns the toy, she meets the little girl who has lost it and they become friends.

SELF-ASSURANCE THROUGH ART

HAVE YOU EVER DRAWN A PICTURE and wanted to crumple it up and throw it away? Do you compare your art projects to those around you and feel that your work is not good enough? That's how Vashti feels in *The Dot* and how Ramon feels in *Ish*. These two books, written and illustrated by Peter H. Reynolds, explore the artistic experiences of two children—their insecurities, their doubts, their critics, and finally, their successes. Vashti and Ramon find a way to feel confident; they develop a sense of self-assurance through their art. These are great books to share before beginning an art project. In one school, the art teacher uses these books to encourage students to accept their own best efforts.

Two other books feature characters who struggle to create. *Regina's Big Mistake* and *Emily's Art* describe how each main character searches for satisfaction through art projects. *Painted Dreams* features a girl in Haiti whose artistic talent and creativity help her family. *Emma's Rug* explores one child's inspiration to create.

In all of these books, the characters feel some pressure to conform but choose to be independent. They pursue their dreams and find success and fulfillment.

24 Catalanotto, Peter * *Emily's Art*

Illus. by the author * Atheneum, 2001 * 0-689-83831-X

EUROPEAN AMERICAN * GRADES 1–3

Emily, a first-grader, loves to paint and she helps her friend Kelly learn to draw butterflies. When there is an art contest, the judge dismisses Emily's picture and selects Kelly as the winner. Emily is hurt and dejected and vows never to paint again. She goes to the nurse's office to rest, and when she wakes up Kelly is there too. Kelly is upset with how her classmates are treating her. Together, Emily and Kelly help each other feel better and return to the classroom where the teacher is having a party for all of the artists.

25 Moss, Marissa * *Regina's Big Mistake*

Illus. by the author * Houghton Mifflin, 1990 * 0-395-55330-X

AFRICAN AMERICAN * GRADES K-2

Regina tries to create a picture of the rain forest but she cannot seem to get the idea in her head onto the paper. She makes a mistake and gets another sheet of paper; her teacher tells her that she cannot use any more paper now. So, Regina begins her picture. Slowly, she fills in the details. When she is almost done, her crayon wobbles and her sun is spoiled . . . or is it? She makes a moon instead and finishes her perfect picture of the rain forest at night.

26 Reynolds, Peter H. * *The Dot*

Illus. by the author * Candlewick, 2003 * 0-7636-1961-2

MULTICULTURAL * GRADES 1-4

Vashti says, "I can't draw!" Her teacher tells her to make a mark, so she jabs on the paper with a marker and makes a dot. Then she signs her name. Her teacher frames Vashti's dot picture and Vashti is inspired to explore the possibilities of making dots. Her artistic talent is admired by a young boy who expresses his desire to draw. Vashti encourages him to sign a squiggle that he has made. Vashti is depicted as a white child and the boy who admires her work is black.

27 Reynolds, Peter H. * *Ish*

Illus. by the author * Candlewick, 2004 * 0-7636-2344X

HISPANIC AMERICAN * GRADES 1-4

Ramon's love of drawing evaporates when his brother Leon laughs at him. Ramon tries to recapture his joy but he cannot, so he gives up. His sister, Marisol, has saved all of his crumpled pictures and they discuss his work. His drawing of a vase is not an exact rendering, but it is "vase-ish." The freedom of doing "ish" pictures restores his pleasure in art. He even tries "ish" writing. And he "lived ishfully ever after."

28 Say, Allen * *Emma's Rug*

Illus. by the author * Houghton Mifflin, 1996 * 0-395-74294-3

JAPANESE AMERICAN * GRADES K-3

Where does inspiration come from? For Emma, it is her rug. After she sits quietly and stares at her rug, she draws and paints. Everyone recognizes her artistic talent; she even wins a citywide art competition. Then her mother washes the rug. Emma is devastated. She believes her inspiration is gone, and she packs away her drawings and paintings; she throws away her art supplies and she throws away her rug. Sitting alone in her room, she “sees” something. Running outside, she is inspired with images. The final page is a picture of Emma—drawing again.

29 Williams, Karen Lynn * *Painted Dreams*

Illus. by Catherine Stock * Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1998 * 0-688-13901-9

CARIBBEAN—HAITI * GRADES 1-3

Ti Marie has a dream—to be an artist—and she draws pictures whenever she can. A mysterious neighbor, Msie Antoine, lives in a compound of houses that are brightly colored and decorated with carvings and sculptures. Ti Marie’s family is too poor to buy her supplies, so she sifts through the trash from Msie Antoine. One day, Ti Marie helps her mother at the market. She notices that the wall behind their stall is large and empty and she begins to fill it with bright, colorful paintings. The people in the market come to see Ti Marie’s paintings and they buy her mother’s vegetables. The family realizes the importance of Ti Marie’s art.

CONCEPT BOOKS: NUMBERS AND COUNTING

YOUNG CHILDREN TAKE PRIDE IN THEIR ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

Learning to whistle or tie shoes, getting dressed by themselves, and going to school are important achievements. A young child develops a positive self-image by demonstrating his or her mastery of information—knowing letters and numbers, for example. Once children know how to count, they want to expand their skills. Using books that describe items from other countries introduces new information and allows children to apply their understanding of numbers.

Ten Mice for Tet, *One Is a Drummer*, *One Leaf Rides the Wind*, and *One Child, One Seed* are among the many counting books that incorporate information about other cultures. Other books, such as *Grandfather Counts*, use counting and numbers to explore immigrants' experiences as they adjust to another culture. After interacting with these books, children could create a class counting book that reflects their cultural backgrounds. This could also be an activity for a "Family Night" at a school, library, or community center.

30 Cave, Kathryn * *One Child, One Seed: A South African Counting Book*

Photographs by Gisèle Wulfsohn * Henry Holt, 2002 * 0-8050-7204-7

AFRICAN—SOUTH AFRICA * GRADES K–2

Nothando has one pumpkin seed that she plants using her two hands. Her brother and his friends weed, water, and hoe—illustrating the number three. Each new number is connected to the growth and use of the pumpkin. Finally, Nothando has one pumpkin seed to plant and the cycle begins again. This book has several themes. There is the basic counting book with a paragraph explaining the action. A sidebar provides more information about Nothando and her family and home in the Nkandla district. There are photographs of the family's house, with its walls of wood, mud, and grass. There is information about the crops and weather, the store that is a ten-minute walk from the homestead, the surrounding geography, and the meal that is

made from the pumpkin. A recipe for *Isijingi* (pumpkin stew) is included and there is a map of South Africa showing the location of Nkandla.

31 Cheng, Andrea ★ *Grandfather Counts*

Illus. by Ange Zhang ★ Lee & Low, 2000 ★ 1-58430-010-8

CHINESE AMERICAN ★ GRADES 1–3

When Helen's mother's dad arrives from China, it is hard to understand him since he speaks only Chinese. Gong Gong (Grandfather) tries to speak to Helen and her siblings and is surprised and a bit disappointed that they do not know any Chinese. With no friends and no one to talk to, Gong Gong becomes withdrawn. Helen used to watch the trains go past her bedroom window, but now Gong Gong has her room and Helen must go outside to wave to the engineer. Then she realizes that her grandfather is waving too. The barriers begin to break down when Grandfather comes out to sit beside Helen and they count the cars of the train—in Chinese. Together they learn numbers—Helen in Chinese and Grandfather in English! A list of Chinese characters for words and numbers is included.

32 Hartmann, Wendy ★ *One Sun Rises: An African Wildlife Counting Book*

Illus. by Nicolaas Maritz ★ Dutton, 1994 ★ 0-525-45225-7

AFRICAN ★ GRADES PRESCHOOL–2

As one sun rises, the numbers from 2 to 10 count African animals, such as elephants, suricates, impalas, egrets, lions, and hyenas. Then, when the moon appears, the count goes from 10 to 2 with bats, frogs, crickets, owls, genets, and spiders, ending with "One sun rises over Africa." A Note describes the animals that are counted in this book.

33 Mannis, Celeste Davidson ★ *One Leaf Rides the Wind: Counting in a Japanese Garden*

Illus. by Susan Kathleen Hartung ★ Viking, 2002 ★ 0-670-03525-4

ASIAN—JAPAN ★ GRADES PRESCHOOL–1

Haiku verses present numbers from 1 to 10. Elements in a Japanese garden, including temple dogs, sandals, and koi fish, are counted. A

brief note appears on each page to further explain the Japanese garden. The illustrations are in muted colors and clearly depict each item to be counted.

34 Shea, Pegi Deitz, and Cynthia Weill * *Ten Mice for Tet*

Illus. by To Ngoc Trang; embroidery by Pham Viet-Dinh * Chronicle, 2003 * 0-8118-3496-4

ASIAN—VIETNAM * GRADES PRESCHOOL–1

From 1 to 10, the mice prepare for Tet, the celebration of the new year in Vietnam. Following the illustrated pages, there is a note that explains “About Tet” and each number and phrase is given a detailed explanation. For example, “2 mice go to market” describes some of the items that would be included in a Tet celebration and highlights the importance of having flowers for luck, prosperity, and happiness. The illustrations are bright-colored embroidery and provide a clear representation of the mice to be counted.

35 Thong, Roseanne * *One Is a Drummer: A Book of Numbers*

Illus. by Grace Lin * Chronicle, 2004 * 0-8118-3772-6

CHINESE AMERICAN * GRADES PRESCHOOL–1

A Chinese American girl counts from 1 to 10. Many of the items reflect her Chinese heritage, such as dim sum and the Dragon Boat Festival. After using this book, share other books by Grace Lin including *Fortune Cookie Fortunes* and *Dim Sum for Everyone*. These books are discussed in Chapter 3.

CONCEPT BOOKS: ALPHABET

KNOWING THE ALPHABET IS ANOTHER ACCOMPLISHMENT for young children; and the alphabet also provides a framework for reports and informational text. Margaret Musgrove's classic book *Ashanti to Zulu* is an example of using the alphabet to provide a structure for information. The books featured here can provide models for projects on cultures. Children can work in groups to research different cultures and create informational alphabet books. This allows them to practice research skills as well as writing informational texts.

36 Ajmera, Maya, and Anna Rhesa Versola * *Children from Australia to Zimbabwe: A Photographic Journey Around the World*

Illus. with photographs * Charlesbridge, 1997 * 0-88106-999-X
MULTICULTURAL * GRADES 3–6

This alphabetical tour of the world has a double-page spread about each country and its children. Maps, flags, and photos help to explain the history. A “more facts” box is also included. Other countries of the same “letter” are listed to whet the appetite for further research. This is a very attractive browsing book. (And X is for the imaginary place known as Xanadu—where you can be what you want to be!)

37 Bruchac, Joseph * *Many Nations: An Alphabet of Native America*

Illus. by Robert F. Goetzl * BridgeWater, 1997 * 0-8167-4389-4
NATIVE AMERICAN * GRADES 1–4

Most of the letters in this alphabet book feature specific native people—Anishanabe, Blackfeet, Choctaw, Dakota, and so forth. Other letters describe items associated with native cultures, such as Eagle, Fox, and Visions. Teachers and librarians can use this book to suggest areas of further research. An Author's Note celebrates the diversity of Native Americans across the Americas.

38 Chin-Lee, Cynthia * *A Is for Asia*

Illus. by Yumi Heo * Orchard Books, 1997 * 0-531-30011-0

ASIAN * GRADES K-3

Kites, New Year, Qur'an, water buffalo, xiang qi (a Chinese game) are among the items presented in this alphabet book. Each letter is accompanied by a brief paragraph explaining the item and a letter from one of the cultures. For example, xiang qi is also written in Chinese characters and yurt is written in Mongolian.

39 Chin-Lee, Cynthia, and Terri de la Peña * *A Is for the Americas*

Illus. by Enrique O. Sánchez * Orchard Books, 1999 * 0-531-30194-X

MULTICULTURAL * GRADES 2-6

The Americas—North America, Central America, South America—are featured in this alphabet book that covers food, sports, homes, locations, animals, music, dance, beliefs, and more. Three additional letters from the Spanish alphabet follow the A to Z. An Introduction describes “The Americans and Their Languages.”

40 Compestine, Ying Chang * *D Is for Dragon Dance*

Illus. by YongSheng Xuan * Holiday House, 2006 * 0-8234-1887-1

ASIAN—CHINA * GRADES PRESCHOOL-2

Celebrate Chinese New Year with this colorful alphabet book. Acrobats balance on Balls. Firecrackers and Dragon Dancers keep the Evil Spirits away. There are Noodles, Oranges, and Steamed Dumplings for the celebration. Z for Zodiac concludes the alphabet. Additional information, including a recipe for New Year's Dumpling Delight, follows the text.

41 Elya, Susan Middleton * *F Is for Fiesta*

Illus. by G. Brian Karas * Putnam, 2006 * 0-399-24225-2

HISPANIC * GRADES PRESCHOOL-3

This book opens with a glossary of the Spanish words with their pronunciation and translation into English. For example: *Abuela* (ah Bweh lah) Grandma. An Author's Note explains the Spanish alpha-

bet. Then the alphabet book begins. Letters are presented in a rhyming text accompanied by bright, colorful illustrations. The theme for the book is celebrating a fiesta, so words like *globos* (balloons), *salsa* (sauce, music, a dance), and *velas* (candles) get you ready for a party.

42 Musgrove, Margaret * *Ashanti to Zulu: African Traditions*

Illus. by Leo Dillon and Diane Dillon * Dial, 1976 * 0-8037-0357-0

AFRICAN * GRADES 2–6

Each letter of the alphabet introduces a group of African people. Information about their customs and location is included in each brief description. This book received the 1977 Caldecott Medal.

43 Onyefulu, Ifeoma * *A Is for Africa*

Illus. with photographs * Dutton, 1993 * 0-525-65147-0

AFRICAN * GRADES K–2

The color photographs in this book invite readers to learn more about everyday life in Africa. Each letter of the alphabet correlates with an aspect of African life and culture—for example, “B is for beads a girl may wear on her head, ears or neck.”

44 Tapahonso, Luci, and Eleanor Schick * *Navajo ABC: A Diné Alphabet Book*

Illus. by Eleanor Schick * Simon & Schuster, 1995 * 0-689-80316-8

NATIVE AMERICAN—NAVAJO * GRADES PRESCHOOL–3

“Arroyo,” “Belt,” and “Cradle Board” begin this alphabet book featuring aspects of Diné life. The illustrations depict traditional Navajo designs, such as the beautiful silver and turquoise “Necklace” and the geometric pattern of the “Rug.” There is a pronunciation guide and a glossary.

ACCEPTANCE AND SELF-IMAGE

MANY BOOKS FEATURE CHARACTERS WHO FEEL DIFFERENT, lonely, and left out. Children want to be reassured that they will be accepted. They want to make friends and get along with others. Both *The Name Jar* and *My Name Is Yoon* feature a girl from Korea who feels uncomfortable about sharing her name. After reading these books, many children enjoy thinking of new names for themselves and researching the meaning of names from many cultures. *Father's Rubber Shoes* explores the need to fit in from the perspective of a Korean boy.

Being different and accepting yourself are themes in *Shrinking Violet*. *Speak English for Us, Marisol!* describes how a child who has learned English becomes responsible for the needs of many others, including adults. In *I Hate English!*, Mei Mei is reluctant to learn English, thinking she will lose her identity. *Yoko* wants to have her classmates accept her. And Alex (in *Alex and the Wednesday Chess Club*) finds a way to enjoy playing chess. All of these books celebrate children who are independent.

45 Best, Cari * *Shrinking Violet*

Illus. by Giselle Potter * Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001 * 0-374-36882-1

EUROPEAN AMERICAN * GRADES 1–3

Violet is very shy. She is so shy that she refuses to be a part of “Carry-the-Flag Day” at school. Most people understand, but one classmate, Irwin, enjoys teasing her. Even though Violet does not participate in many activities, she does observe and learn. She is a great mimic and can act dramatically, but she only performs for herself. When her class plans a play on the solar system, Violet is assigned to be the offstage narrator—Lady Space. On the night of the performance, she reads her part with confidence. Irwin, however, cannot find his spot on stage and everything is disrupted. Violet’s creative narration saves the day.

46 Choi, Yangsook * *The Name Jar*

Illus. by the author * Knopf, 2001 * 0-375-80613-X

KOREAN AMERICAN * GRADES 2–4

Unhei has moved with her family to America, leaving her beloved grandmother in Korea. On the bus to her first day at school, kids talk to her and ask her name but are unable to say it correctly. Unhei is embarrassed by their attempts and, when she arrives at her classroom, she says she has not picked her name yet. At home, she tells her mother she wants an American name and her mother reminds her of the heritage of the name Unhei. Back at school, Unhei finds a glass jar on her desk. It is filled with names that her classmates have selected for her. Unhei does not pick an American name immediately. At the Korean grocery store, Joey, a classmate, overhears Mr. Kim call her “Unhei”; he listens carefully and repeats her name perfectly. The next day, the name jar is gone (removed by Joey in hopes Unhei would keep her Korean name) and Unhei introduces herself using her real name.

47 English, Karen * *Speak English for Us, Marisol!*

Illus. by Enrique O. Sánchez * Albert Whitman, 2000 * 0-8075-7554-2

HISPANIC AMERICAN * GRADES PRESCHOOL–2

Marisol wants to get right home after school. Her cat may have delivered her kittens! But Marisol’s trip home is delayed by friends and family who want her to interpret for them, translating Spanish into English. Even when she finally arrives at home she must wait to see her cat while she helps her mother with the phone bill. Finally, she sees her cat and discovers that the kittens have arrived. Marisol is a child with a lot of responsibility. Her knowledge of both English and Spanish is an important asset to her community and she is proud of her accomplishments.