Mirrors & Windows: Why Diversity Must Be Better Represented in Children’s Fiction

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Abstract

Children’s literature and film has been unbalanced in terms of its representation of diverse cultures. Fiction geared towards children in the United States should include more protagonists from minority culture backgrounds in order for children to grow into adults who value their own culture as well as the cultures of others. This essay explores how children’s fiction can help combat cultural and racial prejudice in American adults by shaping their worldview as children.
New research found only 1% of children’s books featured a main character from a black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) background. My student thought he had to write about white people – this is why all children’s backgrounds must be represented in the books they read. Darren Chetty

Teacher, writer and researcher

Wednesday 18 Jul 2018 3:44 pm. Share this article via facebook Share this article via twitter Share this article via messenger. Yesterday the Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE) released a report on diversity in children’s books. The results are alarming. This echoes the language of Rudine Sims Bishop’s 1990 essay Mirrors, Windows and Sliding Doors. The phrase “mirrors and windows” was initially introduced by Emily Style for the National SEED Project. A mirror is a story that reflects your own culture and helps you build your identity. A window is a resource that offers you a view into someone else’s experience. It is critical to understand that students cannot truly learn about themselves unless they learn about others as well. Why are mirrors important? Multicultural education scholar Rudine Sims Bishop talks about books as mirrors, which are texts in which children can find themselves, their families, and their communities reflected an