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Multi-Cultural  
Literature at Home

## Abstract

As our society changes and becomes less and less homogeneous so do our schools. Many schools in our state are dealing with cultural issues they have never before encountered. Another growing issue within schools is that of literacy. Many children are having difficulty learning how to read. One of the issues as a teacher in this new culturally diverse class setting is how to reach all of the children in your class. One way to do this is by having multi-cultural literature in the classroom for children to read. Children need to read something that is written about someone like themselves because it brings more meaning to them. Another growing concern in our schools today is a lack of parent involvement. It can be a struggle to get parents to come into the school. One way to help students get the help they need from home is to involve the parents in some way in the child's education. The way I have chosen to do that is through multi-cultural literature packs which the child takes home with them. These packs would include a book, a tape recording of the book, three activities to go with the book, and any materials a child may need to complete these activities. By making up these packs the child gets to read a book, but does not necessarily need the parent's assistance in reading. Then after the parent and child listen to the book together they complete the assigned activities.

## Acknowledgements

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- ❖ I would also like to thank the Urban Semester Program for opening my eyes to the ever changing needs of students across the state.
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## My Experience

Throughout history our country has always been changing. Our country has always been diverse, but due to our constant transportation advancements it is increasingly more so. As our country changes, so do our schools. Teachers are finding themselves with much more diverse classrooms than they had fifty, or even ten years ago. With this new diversity come new challenges. It is necessary that teachers reach every learner in their class. Literature is a possible avenue for development in this area. By reading books about people from their own cultures children get a feeling of importance. It is a growing need to have multi-cultural literature in your classroom so that every child has the opportunity to read about someone who is like themselves.

It is also a constant struggle to have interaction with parents. There should always be a link between the school and the child's home. Too many times that link is broken for whatever reason. It is vital that teachers work to reconnect the school and the home. Children can only benefit if parents feel comfortable working with the teacher and school.

One way to strengthen that connection is by involving the parents in tasks the child is completing for school. Using literature packs is an excellent way to do this. One problem often encountered when asking parents for help is that they do not feel comfortable helping with school work. By having the book on tape the parent does not even have to read the book aloud, which may be difficult if parents are not confident in their reading abilities. This way the parent and child still have the bonding experience of

enjoying a good book together without the possible embarrassment. All of the activities in the packs are things the family can do together. Through the use of the literature packs even parents who may not be able to read English can feel confident in helping their child with some homework.

When I undertook the task of creating several multi-cultural literature packs I did not realize how difficult it would be. There were many issues I had to deal with throughout the completion of this project. First, I had to find the literature. I thought this was going to be an easy task, but it did not turn out that way. When I really began working on the project I realized just how expensive it was going to be. I had created one literature pack before, but I had not anticipated the possible cost of creating multiple packs. The next problem which arose was making sure that my activities did not all end up sounding the same. Finally, I just had to find the time to work on the project.

When I set out to find the literature I was optimistic. Considering that I am an Elementary Education major and have been collecting children's literature since I was in high school, I thought I would just be able to go through my books and pick out some that were multi-cultural and be done with it. That did not turn out to be the case. When I looked through the literature I had at home I found that I had quite a few multi-cultural novels, but not so many picture books which is what I wanted to use. I was surprised to find that even in my own personal library I had not been buying literature to represent different cultures. Even I had fit into the stereotype.

The next thing I did was attend a warehouse sale for Scholastic, a major book distributor. While I was there I spent almost three hours looking strictly for multi-cultural literature. Unfortunately, book companies do not necessarily separate books as

being multi-cultural. I went up and down aisles repeatedly and found very few pieces of literature I wanted to use. Throughout my search I was extremely disappointed in the lack of books about Hispanic cultures. I did find some, but they were in Spanish. I was not incredibly impressed with the few books about Hispanic families that I did find in English.

Cost was the next obstacle I had not anticipated. When I began buying the books I began to realize how expensive this project was going to be. Overall I think the books alone cost almost fifty dollars. Then there was the added cost of the materials to go in the bags, and the bags themselves. Altogether, I believe I spent over a hundred dollars. I am not sure that if I had to choose a project again I would choose the same topic. I am glad that I will have the resource as I begin my teaching career, but it was an additional financial burden when I did not have the extra money.

As I began working on the activities I sent some to my advisor. Dr. Melser suggested that I had used too many writing activities and should include some activities from other disciplines as well. After reviewing the activities I agreed with her. I began to make it a point to have activities from multiple disciplines in each pack. As I made this adjustment I found it difficult to create activities that were distinctive to each individual book. Some pieces of literature lent themselves more easily than others to unique activities. I found myself stretching my creativity to find activities for each book.

One of the most difficult obstacles I had to overcome was just to find time to work on the project. I chose to complete my thesis during my student teaching. I had originally planned to complete a lot of the work over Christmas vacation, but that just did not happen. That meant that I was trying to complete my thesis while I was trying to

complete a portfolio for student teaching, and in general trying to teach full time in a classroom. I found this to be stressful and difficult. It came down to the fact that I had to put my thesis on hold until I had the opportunity to finish my developmental portfolio. Doing both at the same time was not a very wise decision on my part. I feel like it put unneeded stress on me. Had I chosen to do my thesis the semester before I do not think it would have been as stressful.

Overall, the thesis project was a good experience. I feel like it stretched me as a student and as a professional. It taught me how to prioritize my tasks in order to get everything accomplished. I would not necessarily do it again in the same semester, but I would do the same project over again. I know that I will have an edge on other first year teachers in the area of school-home connection in the area of literacy. The activities I have will be an asset to have at my disposal in my future classroom.

# Bibliography

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Ruby's Wish, Bridges, Shirin Yim

The Boy of the Three-Year Nap, Snyder, Dianne

The Day of Ahmed's Secret, Heide, Florence Parry and Gilliland, Judith Heide

The Halloween Costume Hunt, Watson, Kim

Whoever You Are, Fox, Mem

## In My Momma's Kitchen

In the story the narrator talks about her favorite foods made by her mother. Help someone in your house make your favorite food dish. Use the recipe sheet to write down the recipe to add to our Class recipe book. When everyone is done we will have a recipe book with all of our favorite yummy recipes! 😊

## In My Momma's Kitchen

In the story the narrator tells about her favorite foods made throughout the year. Use the timeline sheet to make a timeline of your favorite foods made throughout the year.

## In My Momma's Kitchen

In the story the narrator talked about all the reasons her kitchen is her favorite room in her house. Draw a picture of your favorite room in your house. Write three sentences about why that is your favorite room.

\_\_\_\_\_ 's favorite recipe is

Ingredients: \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: \_\_\_\_\_

Makes \_\_\_\_\_ servings

## Is It My Turn Now?

This story talks a lot about time. Use the clock in the folder to help you answer these questions. You may need to get some help from a family member.

1. If Little Bill's mom told him that April's game started in 10 minutes and it was 3:15, what time does the game start?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. Bobby's chess match begins in 25 minutes. Right now it is 12:35. What time does the chess match begin?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Little Bill's play begins in 20 minutes. Right now it is 2:10. What time does the play start?

\_\_\_\_\_

## Is It My Turn Now?

During the story Little Bill is going to be in a play and is assigned to be a walrus. With the help of an adult go to <http://www.nationalgeographic.com/coloringbook/archive/> Pick out an animal that you think you would want to be in a play. Print out the coloring book page. Color it and bring it in to school to share with our class. If you do not have a computer at home, or an adult to help you, just ask me and I will help you find a picture! Have fun!

## Is it My Turn Now?

At the beginning of the story, Little Bill feels very lonely at his house. By the end of the story he is feeling much more included and happy. Think about how you feel when you are lonely and happy. Use the paper in the folder to draw a picture of what you look like when you are lonely and happy.

This is me when I am happy.

This is me when I am lonely.

## Knots on a Counting Rope

In the story the boy uses a counting rope to keep track of the number of times his grandfather has told the story. If you had a counting rope to keep track of the number of times you heard a story, what story would it be? Write it down, or draw a picture of it to share with the class.

# Knots on a Counting Rope

Answer these questions.

1. Boy-Strength-of-Blue-Horses uses a counting rope to count the number of times his grandfather has told him the same story. If he had 5 knots on Monday and he gets 2 more every day, how many knots will he have on Saturday?
2. The horse race took 4 hours, and it started at 1 p.m. What time did it end?
3. On Thursday, Boy-Strength-of-Blue-Horses rode his horse 12 miles. On Friday he rode 8 miles. He didn't ride at all on Saturday because he was playing with his friends. On Sunday he rode 5 miles. How far did he ride altogether?

## Knots on a Counting Rope

In the story the grandfather describes *blue* as the morning, the sunrise, and the sky to his grandson. Think about how you would describe your favorite color to someone who could not see. Use the watercolors in the bag to paint a picture of your description.

## Looking Out for Sarah

Answer the following questions on a piece of paper. How did it feel to be blind for a little while? What were the challenges? What things helped you to be able to get around and do things?

## Looking Out for Sarah

For this activity you are going to feel what it would be like to be blind. Find another person at home to do this activity with you. You will both need to put blindfolds over your eyes. While you have the blindfolds on try to tie your shoe. Try leaving your blindfolds on for half an hour.

## Looking Out for Sarah

You should continue wearing the blindfold for the next activity. While you are blindfolded:

- Count the change in your mom's wallet or change purse.
- Measure  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of water into a bowl.
- Measure  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup of water into another bowl.

Now take the blindfold off and check your work.

# Martin's Big Words

In the story Dr. King helped the people in his community and nation. He began by helping just a few people around him. You can help people too. Think about what you can do to help someone in your life, then go out and do it! After you have helped someone draw a picture of what you did and write three sentences about it.

# Martin's Big Words

The life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was very important and memorable. Visit the following website:

<http://www2.lhric.org/poCantico/taverna/98/1.htm>

When you are finished, use the information on the website and in the book to make a timeline of Martin Luther King Jr.'s life.

# Martin's Big Words

Talk to a grandparent, other relative, or neighbor who was alive during the Civil Rights movement in the 1950's and 1960's. Interview that person. Use the form in the folder to complete the interview.

# Martin's Big Words

## Interview

Where did you live during the Civil Rights Movement? \_\_\_\_\_

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What do you remember about the Civil Rights Movement? \_\_\_\_\_

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What changes have you noticed since the Civil Rights Movement? \_\_\_\_\_

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## Ruby's Wish

In the story Ruby wrote a poem to tell about how she felt about her life. Write an acrostic poem using your name and the word wish.

EX.

Aspire

Makes goals

Young woman

Willing to work

Imaginative

Sociable

Happy

## Ruby's Wish

In the story Ruby's family was very important to her. She knew and grew up with many of her relatives. Have your parents or grandparents help you make a family tree of your family going back to your grandparents generation. Use the example to help guide you.



## Ruby's Wish

In the story Ruby had one wish, and that was to go to college. Think about what you would wish for if you had only one wish. Write about your wish and draw a picture to go with your writing.

# The Boy of the Three-Year Nap

Use the dictionary in the bag to look up the words listed. Fill in your answers on the activity sheet included in the folder.

## Dictionary Activity

### 1. Cormorants

definition: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

part of speech: \_\_\_\_\_

Use it in a sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### 2. merchant

definition: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

part of speech: \_\_\_\_\_

Use it in a sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### 3. decree

definition: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

part of speech: \_\_\_\_\_

Use it in a sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# The Boy of the Three-Year Nap

Measure these amounts:

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup of rice

$\frac{1}{3}$  cup of rice

$\frac{1}{8}$  cup of rice

Which is largest?

Which is smallest?

## The Day of Ahmed's Secret

Throughout the story Ahmed describes the sounds in his city. Think about your favorite parts of your city. What sounds do you hear? Find three items in your house that make sounds that remind you of something in your city. Bring them in to school to share with our class. We will “play” our “instruments” to see what our city looks like.

# The Day of Ahmed's Secret

Answer these questions.

1. Ahmed likes to help his family by delivering bottles of water. One day he started with 22 bottles on his cart. At his first stop he dropped off 3 bottles. At his second stop he left 4 bottles. When he got to the next stop he left 6 bottles at the doorstep. At his final stop that day he left 3 bottles. How many bottles did he have left in his cart?
  
2. When Ahmed delivers water he remembers the houses by what color they are. The white house gets 2 bottles of water. The blue house gets 1 more bottle than the white house. The green house needs 2 times the amount of water as the blue house. The red house asks for 2 less bottles than the green house. How many bottles does each house receive?

White: \_\_\_\_\_

Blue: \_\_\_\_\_

Green: \_\_\_\_\_

Red: \_\_\_\_\_

## The Day of Ahmed's Secret

Ahmed was very proud to show his family that he could write his name. Write about a time when you were very proud to show (or tell) your parents something. What did you do? When was your surprise? What did your parents say?

# The Halloween Costume Hunt

Now it is your turn to make a homemade costume. You may use the paper grocery sack in the bag, and anything else you can find in your house. The only rule is you cannot purchase anything! When everyone has made a costume we will have our own Classroom Costume party.

# The Halloween Costume Hunt

In the story all of Little Bill's excitement began when he received an invitation to a costume party. It is your turn to make your own invitation. Use the materials in the bag to create an invitation to a costume party. You should include when and where the party is happening.

# The Halloween Costume Hunt

Little Bill goes on a kind of scavenger hunt through his house. I want you to go on a scavenger hunt through your own house. See how many of these items you can find, and put them in the plastic bag.

Blue pen

Paperclip

Spoon

Bar of soap

Stick of gum

1995 penny

Spool of red thread

## Whoever You Are

At the end of the story the author tells you about some things that are the same whoever you are. Choose one of these things and use the paper enclosed to draw a picture of it.

## Whoever You Are

This is the poem written at the end of the book. Practice it so you feel comfortable enough to go read (or recite) it to another class in our school.

Joys are the same,  
And love is the same.  
Pain is the same,  
And blood is the same.  
Smiles are the same,  
And hearts are just the same-  
Wherever they are,  
Wherever you are,  
Wherever we are,  
All over the world.

## Whoever You Are

In the book the author is telling how people are the same and different, or comparing and contrasting. Use the paper in the folder to compare and contrast yourself and an adult who lives with you. Find ways that you are the same, and ways you are different from each other.