
The Windows and Mirrors of Your Classroom Bookshelf

.....

INSTRUCTIONS

This handout was designed for use with the TEDx Talk “The Windows and Mirrors of Your Child’s Bookshelf” by Grace Lin. The questions and activities in this handout could be used in a work session (e.g., professional learning community, professional development session), for individual coaching, or for self-reflection.

Goals

- ◆ Understand the powerful messages that the books on our shelves send to children about who they are and how they can relate to others.
- ◆ Analyze classroom books to determine how they are providing mirrors for self-reflections and windows into the larger world for every child.
- ◆ Plan book readings that intentionally support children to develop sense of self and empathy skills.

Activity

- ◆ Watch the TEDx Talk.
- ◆ After watching the presentation, use the questions below as a guide to reflect on the messages your books send to children and plan to build a more inclusive and diverse classroom library.
- ◆ Implement your plan and adjust as needed.

“A book can show you the world. But it can also show you a reflection of yourself.”

Grace Lin

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- ◆ What caught your attention from the TEDx talk? What made that fact, excerpt, or example meaningful to you?



- ◆ Why is it important for young children to see themselves in the books we share at story time and display on classroom shelves? How can seeing and hearing stories that reflect children's lives build their sense of self?



- ◆ Why is it just as important for young children to see and hear stories about people whose experiences are different from their own? How can teachers use book readings to support children as they develop empathy?



- ◆ Think about the last few books you read to your class. Reflect on how children saw themselves and others in those books.
 - Who was represented in those books? Who was left out?
 - How were people from diverse backgrounds and experiences shown or talked about? Were their portrayals fair and true?
 - What messages do these books send to children about themselves and about people who are different from them?



- ◆ Plan to balance the mirrors and windows in your library. Share these books with children by removing all books that contain stereotypes or that misrepresent groups of people in any way. Add books that positively reflect children's identities and experiences as well as books that positively and accurately represent people who look or live differently than them.
 - When will you have the time and space to review your classroom library?
 - What will you do with the books that need to be removed?
 - What kinds of mirrors and windows do your children need?
 - How will you acquire new books for your library?
 - Use the "Diverse Bookfinder" search engine (see *Additional Resources* on the next page) to find specific titles, authors/illustrators, or topics.
- ◆ When reading these books with children, pause occasionally while reading. Comment or ask questions that intentionally support children to develop positive sense of self and empathy for others.
 - How will you remind yourself to read these books to intentionally support sense of self or empathy?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Suggestions for diverse and inclusive books to include in your library:

- ◆ **Source:** Diverse Book Finder
- ◆ **Tool:** Diverse Book Finder Search Engine
- ◆ **Link:** <https://diversebookfinder.org/books/>
- ◆ **Description:** Use the keyword search and filters to find inclusive and diverse children's books.

-
- ◆ **Source:** Embrace Race
 - ◆ **Book List:** 20 Picture Books for 2020: Readings to Embrace Race, Provide Solace and Do Good
 - ◆ **Link:** <https://www.embracerace.org/resources/20-picture-books-for-2020>
 - ◆ **Description:** This list was developed to engage the emotions and needs of diverse children. It also features many books written and/or illustrated by people who identify as part of a marginalized community.

-
- ◆ **Source:** Anti-Defamation League
 - ◆ **Book List:** Assessing Children's Literature
 - ◆ **Link:** <https://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/assessing-childrens-literature>
 - ◆ **Description:** This article lists topics and questions to ask yourself when putting together a collection of diverse and inclusive children's books.