

Foreword

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Nancy Larrick's 1965 groundbreaking article, "The All-White World of Children's Literature" pointed out what many already knew but were reluctant to voice, that is, that children's literature was a racist domain. In the context of children's literature, the emperor had no clothes, and the fiction of a representative children's literature was laid to rest.

It has been over 40 years since that historic article was first published. The field of multicultural children's literature was born partly as a result of the awareness inspired by that article as well as by demands from within and outside the discipline of children's literature. It has been a robust and exciting area of study and practice for at least three decades. Because of advocacy on the part of various communities, as well as the nation's changing demographics, and the publishing industry's recognition that their bottom line could improve if they were more inclusive, children's books today reflect a much broader racial and ethnic representation than ever before. But is that all there should be to making children's literature more inclusive, more socially just, more democratic?

Maria José Botelho and Masha Kabakow Rudman's *Critical Multicultural Analysis of Children's Literature: Mirrors, Windows, and Doors* represents the next step in the evolution of the field. In their insistence that an analysis of power relations must play a decisive role in how we read children's literature, they invite readers to think about the interplay of race, class, and gender in books (and, indeed, in life in general). They ask us to think about the context in which children's books are published, written, disseminated, read, and used in the curriculum. That is, they want us to

recognize that the school and library are not islands unto themselves but rather that they exist within a sociopolitical context that is global, national, and local. This context currently includes, on the national and world levels, globalization policies that are leading to increased poverty and deprivation, particularly in developing countries. In those countries, it is a context that is resulting in decreasing opportunities and increasing oppression, and consequently, in greater immigration and, at the same time, in harsher immigration policies, particularly in Western Europe and the United States. It is also a context that includes an undeclared war in which thousands of Americans and hundreds of thousands of Iraqis have been killed; and a “war on terror” leading to a growing fear of the “Other” in our own nation, a chipping away of our civil rights, and, on an international level, to a greater mistrust of the United States among many other nations in the world. In schools, and, increasingly, in colleges and universities, the context includes rigid accountability structures, the scripting of the curriculum and erosion of faculty rights, and even the imposition of particular teaching methods (for example, at the school level, the exclusive use of phonics) or approaches to research (in schools of education, inflexible conceptions of “scientifically based research”) that make teaching, and especially the teaching of literature to children, almost an impossibility in many schools. This is the context that Botelho and Rudman think about as they ask us to consider using a critical multicultural analysis of children’s literature in our work as teachers and teacher educators.

The critical multicultural analysis of children’s literature presupposes an understanding of this sociopolitical context. In these pages, you will find, for instance, a history of the publishing industry in terms of children’s literature, as well as a history of the representation of people of color in the literature. You will find theoretical discussions of the social constructions of race, class, and gender, and a deconstruction of multiculturalism. You will learn to use various lenses to develop multiple analyses of the same texts, and you will read descriptions and analyses of many children’s books. While theorizing about gender, you will read about the Cinderella story in numerous global contexts; while learning about the controversies and conflicts inherent in the topic of hair, you will find cogent and helpful analyses of children’s books that treat this topic in many different ways. And, at the end of the book, you will find yourself engaged in conversation not just with the authors but also with Junko Yokota, Mingshui Cai, and Patrick Shannon, some of the most significant scholars in the field, as they reflect on the critical teaching of children’s literature. Throughout, you will discover that it is the weaving together of theory and practice that makes this book especially unique and timely.

Children’s literature is a contested terrain, as is multicultural education.

Taken together, they pose a formidable challenge to both classroom teachers and academics. As such, they are of fundamental significance for the Language, Culture, and Teaching Series and a welcome addition to our understanding of children's literature. Rather than deny the inherent conflicts and tensions in the field, in *Critical Multicultural Analysis of Children's Literature: Mirrors, Windows, and Doors*, Maria José Botelho and Masha Kabakow Rudman confront, deconstruct, and reconstruct these terrains by proposing a reframing of the field. In the process, they invite readers to, in the words of Paulo Freire, read both "the word and the world" (Freire, 1970), that is, to reflect on the words in the text and on their meaning in their lives and in the world so that they can become active agents in the world. Surely all of us—children, teachers, and academics—can benefit from this more expansive understanding of what it means to read books.

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CHAPTER 1

The Metaphors We Read By¹: Theoretical Foundations

The metaphors of mirrors and windows have often framed the scholarship of multicultural children's literature. Children need to see themselves reflected so as to affirm who they and their communities are. They also require windows through which they may view a variety of differences. Books are one way they learn about the world. Once these foundations of story and society are internalized, literature can become a conduit—a door—to engage children in social practices that function for social justice. Literary works focusing on African Americans, Native Americans, Latino/a Americans, and Asian Americans are strongly based on the black/white paradigm that is historically rooted in U.S. power relations. The publication of children's literature by and about people of color was a response to biased sociopolitical and publishing practices that contributed to the underrepresentation of people of color in U.S. public education and children's literature.

Critical multicultural analysis of children's literature (Botelho, 2004) demands a shift from the dominant paradigm of race relations between African Americans and European Americans to one that combines the U.S. power relations of class, race, and gender together. Critical multicultural analysis of children's literature acknowledges that all literature is a historical and cultural product and reveals how the power relations of class, race, and gender work together in text and image, and by extension, in society. (We appreciate the power of image and consider it consistently alongside text. For the purpose of conciseness, we will use text to be all encompassing and inclusive of image.)

Critical multicultural investigations of children's literature focus on the analysis of power relations as factors in the trends of what gets written, illustrated, and published. In other words, meanings found in children's books are not exclusively derived from language but also from institutional practices, power relations, and social position (Weedon, 1997). Children's books offer windows into society; they are sites for struggle among shifting, changing, overlapping, and historically diverse social identities (Shohat, 1995).

Critical multicultural analysis deconstructs hierarchical power relations around which language plays a critical role. The analysis centers on the sociopolitical function of linguistic and visual signs. Stephens (1999: 57) maintains that "The form and meanings of reality are constructed in language: by analyzing how language works, we come nearer to knowing how our culture constructs itself, and where we fit into that construction." We do not live outside of language. How we use language constructs who we are as people, as cultures, and as a society. Language circulates the dominant ideologies of gender, race, and class.

Paul du Gay, Stuart Hall, Linda Janes, Hugh Mackay, and Keith Negus (1997) analyze the Sony Walkman as a way to illustrate how to conduct cultural studies. Their study is instructive because it demonstrates how culture works in contemporary society. Du Gay (1997b: 3) argues that "the biography of a cultural artefact" can only be studied when the process of its articulation is made visible by locating a host of cultural processes. Articulation refers to the process of "connecting disparate elements together to form a temporary unity." Literature is a cultural artifact. Thus, cultural artifacts come to be through a combination of processes and linkages that emerge from particular times and places. He asserts that there are five principal cultural processes: representation, identity, production, consumption, and regulation. These processes considered together complete a circuit, "the circuit of culture." The circuit of culture helps to show how critical multicultural analysis makes these cultural processes visible and highlights its capacity to disrupt power relations.

The analysis of the representation process shows that meaning does not come directly from words but instead is re/presented in language (written or visual). Thus cultural meaning is established through representation, drawing on literary and nonliterary texts (imbedded with discourses) that play a central role in fixing the meaning in literature: Dominant meanings get encoded in books. These cultural meanings offer particular subject positions, which are associated with social identities. Identity is the interface between subject positions and historical and sociopolitical circumstances (Woodward, 1997). Drawing attention to subject positions invites readers to actively construct their own identities, while at the same time

taking action in the constructing of society. Children's books are encoded with particular meanings during their production process, meanings that are constructing identification between the books (cultural artifacts) and particular groups of readers (consumers). In focusing on production, we need to look at the cultural meanings that are imbedded in the literature by examining the textual influences (e.g., genre, focalization, story closure) as well as sociopolitical and historical considerations.

How is the book made culturally meaningful? Du Gay (1997a: 4) argues "in thinking about the production of culture . . . we are also simultaneously thinking about the culture of production." This attention to the culture of production connects us back to representation and identity, while bringing up questions of consumption. Meaning does not begin or end with the book, but is instantiated or made meaningful through reading. The circuit of culture highlights the dynamism of meaning making; it is an ongoing process. Du Gay (1997a: 5) argues that this encoding of particular meanings in products, in this case, in literature, is not where the story ends, but that "meanings are actively made in consumption." In reading the book, the reader can actively resist the subject positions offered by the text and take up new ways of being in the world. Thus the reader is not regulated in how he/she can be in society, but is an active member of society, co-constructing as it changes over time.

The circuit of culture demonstrates that meaning making is a dynamic process: writers encode particular meanings in books and readers often receive them inadvertently, but it is through reading/consuming that meanings are actively made. Critical multicultural analysis calls attention to the reading process. If they are conscious of this process, readers can detect how these messages or ideologies try to regulate their lives, and their society. They can interrupt ideologies that privilege particular groups over others. Critical multicultural analysis calls attention to how identities are constructed, how texts are constructed, how society is constructed, and how language/discourse creates us as much as we create it.

The circuit of culture demonstrates the matrix of discourses that have a hold on us and society: Meaning making is not sent from "one autonomous sphere and received in another autonomous sphere" (du Gay, 1997a: 10), but in a process of dialogue.

Reading against culture disrupts bounded and timeless notions of culture; it is an interruption of the status quo. Critical multicultural analysis is an invitation for readers to be researchers of language. Thus, readers are given opportunities to actively investigate how language works and the hold culture has on them because, as Roland Barthes (1977: 146) contends "the text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture." He further maintains:

A text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author. The reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination.

(Barthes, 1997: 148)

Critical multicultural analysis focuses on the reader as the midwife of meaning. The theoretical constructs of discourse, ideology, subjectivity, and power lead the reader to locating how the power relations of class, race, and gender are exercised in text.

A critical multicultural analysis focuses on the “constructedness” of literacy practices and knowledge (Wooldridge, 2001). The way we read books can further encode coercive power interactions if we wittingly or unwittingly accept the messages in the text and images. Because texts are socially constructed they can be deconstructed. This unpacking of the textual layers helps the reader become more conscious of the decisions that the author and/or illustrator made, foregrounding the choices and omissions. This process leaves the reader poised to pose critical questions, much like the ones proposed by Nathalie Wooldridge (2001: 261):

- What (or whose) view of the world, or kinds of behaviors are presented as normal by the text?
- Why is the text written that way? How else could it have been written?
- What assumptions does the text make about age, gender, [class], and culture (including the age, gender, and culture of its readers)?
- Who is silenced/heard here?
- Whose interests might best be served by the text?
- What ideological positions can you identify?
- What are the possible readings of this situation/event/character? How did you get to that reading?
- What moral or political position does a reading support? How do particular cultural and social contexts make particular readings available? (e.g., who could you not say that to?) How might it be challenged?

Children are invited to read and reread the text, taking stock of their reactions and responses. The point of view of the story is considered because the perspective determines the position(s) of power from which the reader “sees” the story. The social processes among the characters are explored to determine how power was exercised along the continuum from

domination and collusion to resistance and agency. The story ending is considered in this process, examining the assumptions imbedded in the story's closure. The illustrations may be analyzed to determine how the text and images work together as well as to take stock of how power is represented in them. The genre of the text is closely examined because these conventions influence how the story gets told. They have an impact on the reader's expectations for the text.

Children's literature is read against its sociopolitical context. Readers ascertain what cultural themes are imbedded in the work. They search for ways in which the sociopolitical situations of the characters shape these themes. The text is considered within its historical context over time. In addition, it is important to discern the prevailing ideologies/worldviews about class, race, and gender.

We grappled with many ways of naming our theoretical framework. We considered "critical analysis" and "multicultural analysis;" both designations fell short of what we are trying to accomplish through these dynamic and disciplined reading practices. "Critical" and "multicultural", together, captured our analytical lens because they are the best words we have available to us at the present time. "Critical" demands reading beyond the text and making connections between the local and sociopolitical/global and the personal and the political, all grounded by historical analysis. It calls attention to the power imbalance in society as well as its organization. "Critical" implores us to pay attention to the social work of language because how we use language shapes perceptions and social processes. "Multicultural" acknowledges the multiple histories among us; the dynamism, diversity, and fluidity of cultural experience; and unequal access to social power. Critical multicultural analysis requires inward and outward examination, recursively.

Theories inform theories, and through their application, we theorize practice. Theories are dialogical (Cummins, 2000). Our theoretical framework builds on Masha's (1995) issues approach to children's literature and Sonia Nieto's (1997, 1999, 2004) research on Puerto Rican children's literature and multicultural education. Maria José's (2004) dissertation research on critical multicultural analysis of children's literature anchors this book project. Masha argues for a critical reading of the social issues such as gender and heritage. Sonia demonstrates how cultural specificity contributes to the analysis of the Puerto Rican experience in children's literature. She advocates for multicultural education that is anti-racist, basic, and critical education for all children, that is pervasive and dynamic, grounded by social justice imperatives. Maria José's doctoral thesis develops the theoretical and pedagogical foundations of the critical multicultural analysis of children's literature.

Like some social scientists, we consider children's literature as social transcripts. Sherry Ortner (1991) claims that the United States' great ethnography is in the form of literature. Maxine Greene (1988: 184) refers to literature as "an encounter with the text [that] relates very closely to the experience of qualitative research, since it makes so very clear that the meaning of any situation is always a meaning for particular human beings with different locations in the world." Critical anthropology (Abu-Lughod, 1991; Behar, 1993; Dirks, Eley & Ortner, 1994; Goode & Maskovsky, 2001; McLaren, 1999; Moss, 2003; Ortner, 1991, 1994, 1998) and critical ethnography (Carspecken, 1996; Goodall, 2000) contribute to a complex reading of children's literature because critical anthropological practices show the complex workings of culture and demonstrate that cultural themes come from power relations, rooted in particular historical and sociopolitical conditions.

The cultural studies of Stuart Hall (1996) and Paul du Gay (1997a & b) and colleagues (du Gay, Hall, Janes, Mackay & Negus, 1997) have complicated our understanding of identity and cultural production. Their scholarship has deepened our understanding of the unfolding of cultural identity as well as how cultural artifacts become meaningful over time.

The political criticism of Terry Eagleton (1996) grounds critical multicultural analysis. He maintains that literary theory is a political endeavor. He advocates for literary study that is grounded in democratic impulses. He argues that literature is a social construct that is historically, sociopolitically, and discursively rooted in social ideologies that maintain power relations. The critical literary criticism of children's literature by Peter Hollindale (1988/1992), Peter Hunt (1992), Roderick McGillis (1996), Lissa Paul (1998), and John Stephens (1992) greatly contributes to our theoretical framework. These literary theorists bring Eagleton's understandings about literature and literary theory to children's literature, as well as drawing on critical discourse analysis.

Michel Foucault's (1972, 1980) definitions of discourse (which James Gee [1999] draws from), knowledge, and power, further support critical multicultural analysis. His genealogical work reveals how power structures shape and change the boundaries of "truth." Thus Foucault notes that truth is no longer unchanging and universal, but the perpetual object of appropriation and domination. The feminist poststructuralism of Bronwyn Davies (1999, 2000) and Chris Weedon (1997) bring feminist thought to Foucault's work. Their research on subjectivity and agency are important contributions to critical multicultural analysis. The critical discourse analysis of Norman Fairclough (1989, 1992), James Paul Gee (1999, 2001a & b), and Allan Luke (1995, 2002) demonstrate how language, power, social groups, and social practices work together. Their work

highlights how language use or discursive practices are implicated in social practices and processes.

The New Literacy Studies of David Bloome (1987, 1989), Colin Lankshear (1997), and Brian Street (1993, 1995) move away from the concept of literacy as an autonomous activity to literacy as an ideological activity, shaped by historical and sociopolitical circumstances. The critical pedagogies of Paulo Freire (1970/1985), Colin Lankshear and Peter McLaren (1993), and Ira Shor (1992) create the circumstances to enact critical literacy, leading students to “read” their sociopolitical situation.

Critical literacy offers tools for students to examine how society exercises power over who they are and what they want to become. The edited books by Sandy Muspratt, Allan Luke, and Peter Freebody (1997) and Barbara Comber and Anne Simpson (2001), respectively, focus on the application of critical literacies in classrooms across educational contexts and political borders. These theorists contribute to the theoretical framework that underpins our approach to literary study. Literary theories are ideological (Eagleton, 1996) and dialogical. We use critical multicultural analysis as a way to clarify and ground our theoretical/pedagogical/sociopolitical position as well as to speculate on new territories.

Paulo Freire’s (1970/1985) work tells us that liberatory literacy education can provide tools for social change. If we identify the cultural origins of assumptions, we are poised for action or praxis. A Freirian perspective demands the problematizing of children’s literature. Praxis is defined as the naming of an issue, conflict, or contradiction, critically reflecting on the issue, and transforming it through practical application. The reflection takes the shape of dialogue with other people and with other texts. This dialogue is recursive and creates new spaces for unlearning and learning.

Our sampling of children’s literature is not comprehensive but rather includes texts that serve as illustrations for the particular conceptual perspectives, historical trends, and cultural themes that we analyze.

Our intention is not to standardize interpretations of these texts but to make our reading public. We do not want to impose our meaning making of the texts, but rather expose the social implications of our meaning making. We invite the reader to read all texts critically. We invite the reader to find seeds for applying critical multicultural analysis through these chapters.

Throughout the book we conduct literature reviews to reflect the scholarly dialogues about particular aspects of children’s literature. Literature reviews can extract or decontextualize the conversation from historical and sociopolitical factors. Genealogical analysis, as conceived by Michel Foucault (1977), offers possibilities for situating these “dialogues.” Going beyond historical inquiry, this analysis shows the instability of events and

speaks to the specificity of those actions as manifestations of struggle among power relations, revealing conflict, contradiction, and events as products of multiple processes. Genealogical analysis proceeds in two dimensions: a deconstruction of events as well as a reconstruction of associated power relations to these events. Genealogical analysis opens up a space for speculation and dialogue, unsettling suppositions about “what culture is and how it works” (Dirks, Eley, & Ortner, 1994: 6). A genealogical analysis of multiculturalism in children’s literature demonstrates how multiculturalism is conceived and constituted in U.S. society.

Genealogical analysis grounds our literature reviews of multiple definitions of culture, the history of multiculturalism in children’s literature, the sociopolitical context of children’s literature, the scholarship of multicultural children’s literature, the discourse of children’s literature, and reading the intersectionality of class, race, and gender in children’s literature. Critical multicultural analysis of race, gender, and class ideologies in children’s literature reveals the historical and sociopolitical dimensions of culture.

Rosaura Sánchez (1992) concludes that the comprehensive analysis of any cultural product is incomplete without contextualizing it within history and society. In addition, Kirby Moss (2003: 112) advocates for “recontextualizing” because it is essential “to lure cultural experience and group identity out of their common presentations by moving deeper into postmodern and critical explorations of authority and representation.” The act of recontextualizing shows how people are working against “essentialized boundaries of assumptions.” They do this, he argues, as a “basic necessity to define themselves and their experience in relation and in contrast to the way they are perceived to be defined.” Catching cultural actors in action shows how they exercise power in their everyday lives. Moss contends that as we struggle “to understand people as they experience their race, class, and subjective identities in general, we see contradictions and paradoxes to ingrained discourses and constructions, not splinterings from some mythical whole, but people constantly searching through their actuality for some type of whole” (Moss, 2003: 113). We have conceptualized these processes as re/contextualizing, calling attention to the dynamism, recursivity, reflexivity, and depth required in situating social practice.

We bring particular assumptions about literature, authors, reading, and readers to the critical multicultural analysis of children’s literature. We believe that all literature is a cultural and historical product, emerging from a particular place and time, and reflecting particular cultural and temporal contexts. Stories are social constructs offering a selective version of reality, told from a particular focalization or viewpoint. Authors pos-

ition readers to respond in particular ways through the decisions they make about choice of genre, language use, point of view, and other literary devices. Literary texts are “reflections of historically bound ideologies” (McGillis, 1996). Texts reproduce the dominant values of a culture at a particular time. Therefore, the sociopolitical context shapes the writing, illustrating, and publishing of children’s books.

Furthermore, we argue that reading is a sociopolitical activity, shaped by the reader in conjunction with many sociopolitical influences upon that reader. The critical multicultural analysis of children’s literature takes into consideration the institutional component from within which we read, the power relations involved, and their implications for social justice. We concur with Roderick McGillis (1996) that all reading is political, and that critical analysis functions in two ways:

1. to set out clearly the political or ideological position of the text one is reading, and
2. to clarify one’s own ideological position.

(McGillis, 1996: 103)

Finally, readers will feel included or excluded depending on the author’s presentation and the sociopolitical context, both of the book and the circumstances in which the reading is taking place.

As readers, we must interrogate the power structures that discriminate against certain groups and privilege others. We acknowledge that literature speaks to readers on a personal and emotional level (see Rudman, 1995). Beyond this, as a society, we must confront race, class, and gender relations, the impact of history, and other social issues. Children can understand and grapple with the painful realities of anti-social behavior and thought.

In her “Ideologies in Children’s Literature: Some Preliminary Notes,” Ruth B. Moynihan (1988: 93) argues that “stories told or written for children are often indicators of the dominant values within a society. Various times and cultures reveal various attitudes, not only toward children but also toward life and society.”

What is suitable for children to know and when and how can they be informed? A critical multicultural analysis examines how literature represents power and how the reader can connect those messages with issues of social change and justice. Critical multicultural analysis of children’s literature equips the reader with strategies to unmask dominant ideologies, integrate what they know about themselves with what they learn about others, and translate their reading and thinking into social action. Children’s literature can be a tool for creating a historical, sociopolitical imagination in young readers, and teachers and other adults can serve as important role models of resistant reading.

The pedagogical/literary category of multicultural children's literature, when it is defined as literature containing and pertaining to people of color, or out of the mainstream of society, distorts the social issues of race, class, and gender, and distracts us from addressing social oppression. Without the critical component, multicultural children's literature disallows the problematizing of children's literature, reading, childhood, and the enterprise of publishing children's books. We believe that children's literature should affirm the diversity of our society.

Publishing trends, a history of the phenomenon known as children's literature, definitions of reading, and a firmly grounded perspective on how literature impacts society, support our work. We are interested in the issues of censorship, what gets defined as a classic, and how to use sociopolitical and ethical filters in order to examine literature. What is implicit in the term, "critical multicultural analysis," is that we need to examine the nexus of power in text and images, and by extension, in society. We are also interested in naming the implied audience of the text and the social practices rendered.

Children's books can be tools for discussing social and emotional issues (Rudman, 1995). All too often, well constructed language and illustrations mask underlying messages in texts. The exercise of coercive power often appears artfully and can be internalized by unwitting readers. On a daily basis we are lulled by aesthetic texts around us, often distracting us from their sociopolitical impact. For example, Maria José, who is usually perceptive about the workings of power, was lured by the aesthetic elements of an everyday text, a lawn.

Maria José was traveling with her colleague David down Bloor Street West in Toronto, on the way back to the University of Toronto. They had just participated in a dialogue on critical literacies. With colleagues, they tried to reconcile aesthetic and critical engagement with texts. Maria José had reminded the group that critical and aesthetic response can exist together. David eloquently supported this stance. As they traveled down Bloor, the beauty of a stately building's landscape arrested Maria José's senses. She pointed out to David the greenness of the lawn, juxtaposed with variegated and multicolored plants, and enclosed by a wrought iron fence. It was lush beauty in the middle of a traffic jam.

The aesthetic qualities of a text can engage us emotionally and experientially (Misson & Morgan, 2006). The lawn resonated with Maria José. The greenness echoed back to the valley in which Maria José lived in during her early childhood. The green exuded calm and life. The lawn created a moment of tranquility in a bustling part of the city.

According to Ray Misson and Wendy Morgan (2006: 213), aesthetic texts "lead us to apprehend certain aspects of the world by creating

a structure of textual experience . . . that leads us to think and feel in particular ways.” Apprehension creates “a stronger interpretative element in reading these texts, more room for the reader to expand her or his understanding” (Misson & Morgan, 2006: 214). This interpretative expanse leaves room for readers to hold different interpretations of the text as well as broaden their understanding.

David critically read the lawn and shared his analysis with Maria José, expanding her aesthetic response. Since this gated edifice belongs to an insurance company, he wondered about its extravagant use of money and asked who benefited from this opulence. What was the social function of this beauty? The fence and locked gate kept all passersby from the lawn’s lushness. This experience is one example of how aesthetics can obscure sociopolitical consequence, much like beautiful language and artwork in children’s literature.

All children (young and old) have the capacity to be critical multicultural readers. They can be invited to engage in ongoing dialogue with authors and illustrators as they listen to or read children’s literature. They can insert themselves into the story and can question its point of view, the social processes among characters, and its ending. Children can analyze the positions of power the illustrations or photographs provide and ascertain if the illustrations affirm or contradict the messages in the text.

Children’s social location, age, historical knowledge, and prior experience with the cultural themes and genre of the text shape how the children make sense of the story. The group dynamics adds another layer. With support from teachers and other adults, older siblings, and peers, children become more and more adroit at critically engaging with text and images. Group dialogue can greatly contribute to the children scaffolding each other socially and textually, as they enjoy and problematize books. Can the enjoyment of texts exist alongside critique? Is this combination an oxymoron?

Many adults are concerned that critical analysis will “break the magic of” or “ruin” the story, getting in the way of children enjoying the aesthetic experience of books. From our work with children as young as preschool to high school age, we have witnessed the pleasure they experience in sharing their different observations and interpretations of familiar children’s books. Critical multicultural analysis creates spaces for children to connect texts to their life experiences, other texts (literary and non-literary), and the world.

Oftentimes the level of engagement in classroom dialogue and critical response to literature through multimodalities (e.g., drama, visual arts, poetry, and music) heightens children’s participation in the reading of

the text and increases their pleasure with and understanding of the text. They participate actively and collaboratively across texts and images. Intertextuality is central to this work: Children see that the text's meaning is constructed and reconstructed in interaction with the text, each other, and the world. The critical analysis leads to reconstruction of the text's messages and spaces for apprenticing with new ways of being in the world. The teacher and student roles are reconciled because everyone is actively involved in the reading process. Teachers are no longer keepers of textual meaning.

Through critical analysis, children, Barbara Comber (2001: 8) argues, acquire "repertoires of literacies . . . aesthetic, ethical, cultural, moral stances, views about knowledge, ways of working, organising (sic), thinking and interacting." She continues:

Critical literacy makes children's interests central, because it involves discussing with children how texts work and how they work in the world. It is in all children's individual and collective interests to know that texts are questionable, they are put together in particular ways by particular people hoping for particular effects and they have particular consequences for their readers, producers and users.

(Comber, 2001: 9)

When readers interact emotionally and intellectually with books, their aesthetic stance creates space to consider the texts' cultural assumptions. However, children need support in cultural critique (Cai, 2008). Critical multicultural analysis offers a critical scaffold for reading power in children's literature.

Classroom Applications

- What metaphors do children associate with reading? Guide children in deconstructing these associations. What do the metaphors tell them about their processes as readers?

Recommendations for Classroom Research

- Take stock of how you teach children how to read. Use Chapter 3 (in this text) to name the literacy practices prevalent in your teaching. Which ones are present? Which ones do you need to bring into your work?

Suggestions for Further Reading

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Endnote

1. Title inspired by Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) text, *Metaphors We Live By*.