

10 Quick Ways to Analyze Instructional Materials for Bias

adapted from: 10 Quick Ways to Analyze Children's Books for Racism and Sexism, The Council on Interracial Books for Children

modified by: Karen Saunders and Kathy Thielen

		<u>VISUAL IMAGES</u>		<u>TEXT</u>		
	<u>DESCRIPTOR:</u>	Absent	Present	Absent	Present	Comments
STEREOTYPES	We more often see subtly demeaning stereotypical images of people in non-dominant groups (including race, sex, gender, ability, sexuality). The blatantly infamous overt stereotypes of the past (the grunting savage brave, eye-rolling mammy, inscrutable 'Oriental', limp-wristed 'pansy', dimwitted blonde, or helpless 'cripple') are less common, but still exist.					
TOKENISM	If characters from non-dominant groups are included, are they depicted as genuine individuals with distinctive characteristics and features or are they diminished to cardboard cutouts?					
INVISIBILITY	Are distorted perspectives promoted by ignoring people in non-dominant groups?					
ROLES	Who's Doing What? Are characters from all groups depicted in both leadership roles and less active roles or are only members of the dominant group shown taking leadership and action? Are able-bodied males the active "doers" and females or people with disabilities the inactive observers? In textbooks, are the contributions of all people integrated into the text, or are non-dominant groups (including working class people) relegated to sidebars?					
RELATIONSHIPS	Do members of the dominant group possess the power, take the leadership, and make the important decisions? Do others function in essentially supporting roles?					

10 Quick Ways to Analyze Instructional Materials for Bias

adapted from: 10 Quick Ways to Analyze Children's Books for Racism and Sexism, The Council on Interracial Books for Children

modified by: Karen Saunders and Kathy Thielen

	DESCRIPTOR:	Absent	Present	Absent	Present	Comments
STANDARDS FOR SUCCESS	Does it take "white, male middle class" behavior standards for a person in a non-dominant group to "get ahead"? Is "making it" in the dominant society projected as the only ideal? To gain acceptance and approval, do persons of color, those who live in poverty, or people with disabilities have to exhibit extraordinary qualities - excel in sports, get As, etc.? In friendships between white and non-white children, is it the child of color who does most of the understanding and forgiving?					
LIFESTYLES	Is white middle-class suburban life the unstated norm and all other groups depicted unfavorably? If the non-dominant group in question is depicted as "different", are negative value judgments implied? If the illustrations and text attempt to depict different cultures, do they go beyond over-simplifications and offer genuine insight into another lifestyle? Look for inaccuracy and inappropriateness in the depiction of other cultures. Watch for instances of the "quaint-natives-in-costume" syndrome or the "living in the past" syndrome (most noticeable in areas like clothing and custom, but extending to behavior and personality traits as well).					
HEROES	Can girls, children with disabilities, and those from other non-dominant groups see heroes who are like them?					

10 Quick Ways to Analyze Instructional Materials for Bias

adapted from: 10 Quick Ways to Analyze Children's Books for Racism and Sexism, The Council on Interracial Books for Children

modified by: Karen Saunders and Kathy Thielen

RESOLUTION OF PROBLEMS	<p>When heroes from non-dominant groups or other nations do appear, for what qualities are they admired? Ask this question: "Whose interest is a particular hero really serving?"</p> <p>Does the resolution include class analysis/historical context instead of blaming the victim; collective struggle instead of a savior figure?</p>					
NOTES TO CONSIDER:	<p>Definitions: Non-Dominant Group: Refers to groups who have been historically marginalized (for example women, the impoverished, people of color, LGBTQ, people with disabilities)</p> <p>Dominant Groups: Refers to groups who maintain historical, socio-political, and economic power (for example white, able bodied, male, heterosexuals)</p>					
	<p><u>Student's Self-image:</u> Are norms established which limit any student's aspirations and self-concept? What effect can it have on students to be bombarded by images of the color white as the ultimate in beauty, cleanliness, virtue, etc., and the color black as evil, dirty, menacing, etc. (for example the phrases black-hearted, dark side)?</p> <p>What happens to a student's self-image when none of the heroes ever resemble her?</p>					
	<p><u>Author's or Illustrator's Background:</u> Analyze the biographical material on the jacket flap or the back of the book. If a story deals with a minority theme, what qualifies the author or illustrator to deal with the subject? If the author and illustrator are not members of the minority being written about, what stake does the writer have in the lives of people of this group? If stories are retellings of traditional tales, are sources credited? Was permission sought to retell indigenous tales or is it cultural appropriation?</p>					
	<p><u>Author's/Illustrator's Perspective:</u> No one can be objective. All authors and illustrators work out of a cultural, as well as a personal context. Analyze materials carefully to determine the direction of the author's or illustrator's perspective. Is it patriarchal or feminist? Do non-dominant cultural perspectives also appear?</p>					
	<p><u>Loaded Words:</u> Loaded words carry insulting overtones diminish and restrict our view of ourselves and others. Examples of loaded adjectives are "savage," "primitive," "retarded," "that's so gay," "superstitious," "treacherous," "docile," and "backward". Figurative language also can carry negative connotations. Examples are "blind as a bat," "lame joke," "and dumb blonde".</p>					

10 Quick Ways to Analyze Instructional Materials for Bias

adapted from: 10 Quick Ways to Analyze Children's Books for Racism and Sexism, The Council on Interracial Books for Children

modified by: Karen Saunders and Kathy Thielen

--	--