

York, Sherri. *Booktalking Authentic Multicultural Literature: Fiction and History for Young Readers*. Columbus, OH: Linworth Publishing, 2009. 160p. \$39.95. (ISBN: 1586833006)

"Our children are growing up in a country rich in cultural diversity. As librarians and educators, we are charged with the responsibility of preparing children for the future, a multicultural world. Diversity is all around us." ix

This is how we are introduced to this work. Facts are stated as facts - we are diverse and let's learn about each other. This is a simple yet honest and realistic introduction to the selections of booktalks that are written by various authors of contemporary fiction and history. Ms. York strived to include a sample of well-written, authentic and award winning titles with a focus on contemporary multicultural fiction and history, while she states that "Percentages of books by minority authors in our libraries still do not reflect the ethnic make-up of most schools and communities, but the situation is gradually improving" xi. I think this book will help to improve the gap.

This useful easy-to-use elementary resource provides indexes for subject, title, and author/illustrator/translator, which complements the well designed, easy-to-retrieve information it promises. Along with the questions "How can the information in this book be used?" xiii, and "What should booktalkers realize about booktalking and multicultural literature?" xiv, the instructions go into useful details that ease a new booktalker into a successful, culturally sensitive and respectful talk including insights such as "do not focus on anyone in your audience based on their ethnicity or skin tones."

Each book entry includes information about the author, illustrator, publication, format, reading and interest levels, genre, and subject summary – which I found excessive since the booktalk is already a summary of the content of the book. But, most helpful I think would be the related title(s) category, another example of Ms. York's goal to make her resource efficient to use as well as inclusive.

It seems that no one escapes typos. Or are they not typos? "A Navaho boy" page 63; should it Navajo? On page 7, "the Muslin year" should be Muslim year. In addition to the typo, the lack of knowledge of the Muslim holidays is apparent. Consider this sentence: ".... When Eid, the biggest holiday of the Muslim year..." The Arabic word Eid simply means holiday. So, if it is someone's birthday, it is the eid of his or her birth. There is no one single eid that is the biggest. The "Muslim year" is actually the Muslim calendar called Hijri. Hence, the holiday is an Islamic holiday and not a holiday in a Muslim year. In general Muslims have two eids, two holidays, the Fitr which comes at the end of Ramadan-the month of fasting; and al-Adha which comes after the Haj, the pilgrimage to Makka. Other holidays are also called eid, but a word should follow to tell which holiday.

Many ethnicities are represented: Native American Indian 18; Mexican 19; African American 13; Dominican Republic and Jamaica 1 each. The diversity of Asian and Latino communities is well represented by the various countries including China 9, Korea 4, Filipino, Hmong and Vietnamese 1 each, Japan 8, Pakistan 1 and India 2. Within the Latino category we find Salvador and Chile represented with 1 book for each and Cuba with 3. Palestine is represented with 1 and Jewish 8, while Scotland and Italy are represented with 1 for each.

It seems that it is hard to escape stereotypes and falling into the dominant world view, even if you have the best of intentions. Listen to this statement on page xiii: "if no ethnicity is noted, it is likely the person is European American" - is this to say that all is ethnic but the European? It seems so, because on page 65 it states that Korean American Julia's "....friend Patrick is just plain American..."!!!

The book did not present "ethnic" groups only, but also subjects, issues and themes relating to the human conditions and experiences. From religious holidays to biographies, from sports to crossing borders, from homelessness to disabilities, and from homosexuality to immigrant (24) and USA born (4) experiences, all through the eyes of children. Those children are the (42) boys and the (53) girls, the main characters of these books who told their stories and their impressions of worlds they were brought into and their struggle to belong and be understood, to live in safety and love.

If you're aiming to better serve and include underserved populations in your school and public libraries, this book is for you.

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