Webinar Topic: Strategies for engaging refugee children in learning

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Refugee Children’s Literature:

Books about refugee children “serve a dual function, to educate all children about the experience of persecution, flight and resettlement, as well as reassuring refugee readers that there is new life and hope for the future in an adopted country” (Hope, 2007, p.7).

Criteria for book selection and use:

- books need to be well written, realistically illustrated, and properly researched
- refugees must be depicted positively, showing empathy but not pity
- as much as possible, the situations described should be located geographically and politically to make the most impact in mirroring real life scenarios
- books about refugees need to be introduced and used with sensitivity (Hope, 2007)

Categorizing refugee children’s literature:

Books about the experiences of refugee children can be categorized into three types:

- books that portray political conflicts and wars
- books about refugees’ relocation
- books depicting settlement in different countries (Monobe & Son, 2014)

Strategies for using picturebooks about refugee children with newcomer students:

- compare and contrast picturebooks dealing with refugee stories using Dolan’s (2014) framework for comparison (e.g. cover, representation of refugees, setting, illustration style)
- draw on critical multicultural analysis (see Dolan) to develop second language learners’ critical thinking skills, and intercultural understanding (also good for other students)
- respond through literacy strategies (e.g. prediction visualization, vocabulary tea party, K-W-L chart,) and writing (e.g. personal response, diary in character’s shoes, letters)
- incorporate art (e.g. create a photograph, sculpture, collage, painting, digital storytelling)
- utilize drama (e.g., role playing, hot seat, moving debate, tableaux or still images)
- follow up with research (about refugees in children’s literature or classroom) and problem solving (about the characters, refugee students in the classroom and/or in the community)
Children’s Literature About Refugee Children

Picture books

Novels

References/Resources for Using the Refugee Children’s Literature

Possible discussion question:
1. In what ways can children’s literature be used in expanding the understanding of non-refugee students and validating the experiences of refugee children in our classrooms?