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GATEWAYS TO LIVED EXPERIENCES: ANALYZING FLORIDA'S
B.E.S.T. ELEMENTARY ELA STANDARDS TO CREATE A STANDARDS-
BASED INVENTORY LIST OF MULTICULTURAL K-2 CHILDREN'S
LITERATURE

by

ELIZABETH RIOS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Honors in the Major Program in Elementary Education
in the College of Community Innovation and Education
at the University of Central Florida
Orlando, Florida

Spring Term 2023

Thesis Chair: Dr. Lee-Anne T. Spalding

ABSTRACT

All educators are responsible for making their students feel safe, capable, and seen in the classroom. One way this can be accomplished is by implementing culturally responsive pedagogy. Our students will come from many different backgrounds. One of the most vital ways students will feel seen is by having characters in the books they read that they can identify with and learn from. Therefore, teachers should put effort into including children's literature in their classrooms by choosing culturally diverse books that are also high-quality and align with state standards. There are many high-quality pieces of children's literature that include culturally diverse protagonists, and finding these books is the focus of this study. High-quality multicultural literature exists and is celebrated by several race-based literature awards. This thesis analyzes race-based literature awards for African American and Hispanic children's literature, Florida's ELA standards, and the state's student demographics to create a standards-based inventory list of multicultural K-2 children's literature to distribute to teachers in Orange County. This inventory list acts as a guide and starting point for teachers to see how to choose literature with characters that represent the students, they teach without sacrificing the quality of education. When teachers have the resources to choose high-quality multicultural literature, they can implement them across other disciplines.

DEDICATION

To my grandparents—Emiliano, Hiralдина, Esteban, and Margarita—who sacrificed everything they knew so their families could have better lives.

To my parents, who sacrificed so much of themselves so I could have the opportunities I do today and encouraged me to find a window for every closed door.

To my future husband, who supported me through writing blocks, reminded me of my capability, and who continues to encourage my big ideas.

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Additionally, I would like to extend my thanks to the HUT Liaison, Dr. Sherron Killingsworth Roberts, for her endless kindness and additional expertise.

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PROLOGUE

Growing up, I was always extremely connected to my culture. My dad immigrated to the United States during Nicaragua's Civil War and my mom's parents immigrated during the Cuban Revolution. I grew up with a strong willed, hardworking family that embraces our culture and celebrates our journeys. Stories of heritage and culture hit close to home for me, regardless of whether it relates to my Latin heritage or not. I entered my undergraduate career at the University of Central Florida as a Psychology major. It was not until I accepted a position as a preschool substitute teacher, three years into my Psychology degree, that I realized my love for teaching. In high school, I loved English and Literature, so when I entered my Elementary Education program at the University of Central Florida, Children's Literature became my passion.

I realized the importance of having representation in literature a few years ago. When leaving for college, my mom gave me a book, *90 Miles to Havana* by Enrique Flores-Galbis. She was so excited for me to read this book, as it is a historical fiction novel that tells the story of a young boy escaping from the Cuban Revolution, much like my grandparents did. Similarly, I recall her reaction to the movie *Vivo*, which first takes place in Havana, Cuba then moves to show Cuban-American culture by being set in Miami, Florida, which is where I grew up. It was because of my family's history and these pivotal experiences that I realized her need for sharing the book and her excitement about the movie were rooted in not having seen herself in books or movies previously. In retrospect, growing up I realized it was not common to see ourselves represented in books and the media we consumed. As adults, we are now seeing some representation come to fruition. These gateways to lived experiences sparked the inspiration to

write this thesis to expose the lack of representation and assist teachers in using high-quality literature in the classroom.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on analyzing Florida's Benchmarks for Excellent Student Thinking (B.E.S.T.) English Language Arts (ELA) Elementary Standards and how culturally diverse texts can be chosen while fulfilling these standards. The importance of culturally responsive pedagogy and equity along with my research questions are outlined in this chapter.

Relevance of Study

It is important for educators to be able to access high-quality, culturally diverse literature that supports quality education without perpetuating harmful stereotypes about minority groups (Adichie, 2014). Cultural responsiveness is a skill that can be developed. Culturally responsive pedagogy exists when a teacher's instructional practices affirm and show appreciation for a community's cultural identities and practices (Mellom et al., 2018). In the state of Florida, African American/Black and Hispanic/Latino students make up around 56% of Florida's public school enrollment in the 2021-22 school year (Florida Department of Education, 2022). It is vital for Florida educators to be able to include literature in their classrooms that represents the students they teach while adhering to state ELA standards. The results of this research will provide a standards-based inventory list of K-2 elementary literature pulled from the medal and honor winners of notable race-based literary awards. These results will give educators a launching point on how to highlight diversity in the texts their students read so they may see themselves in the books they read as well as be exposed to other cultures.

Research Questions

My research in this thesis aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are the resources available for teachers to find high-quality literature that is culturally diverse?
2. How can teachers utilize these resources to provide standards-based instruction based on Florida's B.E.S.T. ELA Standards that highlight diversity?

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Growing up in a Latino household, my culture was essential in my upbringing. Media and literature had an enormous impact on my life and how I saw myself in the world. In my home, I was raised accompanied by cultural music, food, and stories, but much of this was not present at school. Diverse stories were emphasized at school during the Hispanic and Black History Months, where we learned about the biographies of impactful historical figures within our ethnic/racial communities. While these stories are necessary to learn about the societal contexts of our ethnic/racial group, nonfiction biographies should not be the only genre through which diverse cultures are represented. After reflecting on my experience in school, I discovered that exposure to fictional stories that were relevant to my culture and the culture of my predominantly African American elementary school was extremely limited. As a student, I should have been afforded the opportunity to see myself in quality literature through my years in elementary education. Stories of minorities should not be limited to designated months of our history—we exist all the time.

An example of these limitations that most can relate to is representation in children's movies. Disney's representation of minorities is historically stereotypical as seen in *Peter Pan* and *The Lady and the Tramp*, or by representing inaccurate depictions of history and folktales, as seen in *Pocahontas* (Javier, 2020). It was not until the last 14 years or so that we began to see an influx of film creators producing intentional, authentic diverse media. *The Princess and the Frog* (released in 2009) was the first time African Americans were truly the center of a Disney fairytale. *Moana* (2016) shows intentionality in referencing Polynesian mythology and *Encanto*

(2021) provides visibility for Colombian culture and families. *The Little Mermaid* live-action movie that is expected in 2023 has sparked inspiration and joy in Black/African American girls and women all over the country through something as simple as giving them representation (Franklin, 2022).

Review of Literature

Theoretical Perspectives

Culturally responsive pedagogy and equity fuel the discussions in my research. The conversation of equity versus equality begins with the acknowledgment that being an educator requires differentiation, which indicates tailoring instruction to meet the needs of each student. While equality ensures everyone receives the same resources, equity ensures everyone receives the appropriate resources to facilitate their success (Milken Institute School of Public Health, 2022). For example, ensuring equity for a student with special needs might mean extra time on an assessment for students with focus dysregulation or specialized technology for a disabled student. Different students will need variations of accommodations and resources to close any gaps in their instruction. In a TED Talk conducted by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2014), she discusses that the damage caused by the misrepresentation of Africans in children's literature and general media contributes to the perpetuation of discriminatory stereotypes. In the context of my research, I aim to mitigate these misrepresentations and underrepresentation by expanding on Florida's B.E.S.T. Elementary Standards list of recommended texts by creating an inventory list of children's literature with culturally diverse protagonists. The books included in this inventory were collected utilizing race-based literature awards, databases, and local awards. By printing

summaries of the information onto an infographic poster, I provided this as a practical resource for teachers to amplify the stories of these populations to use in their elementary classrooms.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy exists when a teacher's instructional practices affirm and show appreciation for a community's cultural identities and practices (Mellom et al., 2018). When students exhibit characteristics or possess a background that is vastly different than their teacher's, it is the teacher's responsibility to acknowledge and respond to the student in a way that displays understanding of their differences. In many cases, the typical classroom will have children of all kinds of backgrounds and beliefs, and educators teach with the knowledge that these students will grow up with the potential to create lasting impacts in the lives around them. This should also be translated into how a teacher approaches instruction. A study by Mellom et al. aimed to "[explain] how the pedagogy and professional development cycle impact teacher practice and attitudes towards ELLs" (p. 101) and concluded that the attitudes of Southern teachers who held prejudices against English Language Learners could be mitigated by training in culturally responsive pedagogies (2018). This demonstrates the importance of providing resources for teachers to participate in cultural responsiveness. In my research, culturally responsive pedagogies were applied to choose high-quality multicultural children's literature. The formats of literature I chose include picture books, chapter books, and graphic novels.

What is Children's Literature?

Children's literature is a category of high-quality books aimed at children from birth to adolescence (Short et al., 2017). These books cover "topics of relevance and interest to children through prose and poetry, fiction and nonfiction" (Short et al., 2017, p.4). In my experience as a preschool substitute teacher, I observed firsthand the diversity of interests that children have in

the stories they enjoy. Some students prefer fantasy, while others prefer informational or comedic stories. Many students also come from different backgrounds and respond well to stories that relate to their home life. These observations led to my conclusion that since children have diverse interests, a classroom library should have a wide range of genres, characters, and cultures. In Rudine Sims Bishop's article "Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors," she highlights that literature is a conductor of the human experience where reading becomes a "means of self-affirmation" (1990, p. 1). For this reason, literature should not only be looked at as a facilitator of academic learning, but also for its value in the growth of children's lives.

How is high-quality literature measured?

'Quality' is characterized by originality, relevance, imaginative writing, etc. so that the literature can come to life in the child's mind and create a long-term impact (Short et al., 2017). Books that have been deemed high-quality children's literature will first gain popularity and then receive an award or honor after a review by a committee or group. Several notable awards will be reviewed by committees of the Association of Library Service to Children (Association of Library Service to Children, 2021a).

The most notable awards distributed annually for these books are the Newbery Medal and the Caldecott Medal. Books with these awards earn a gold seal on their front cover that states the award's title. The Newbery Medal, named after John Newbery, is an annually awarded honor given to an author who in that year contributed an original, distinguished piece of American children's literature (Association for Library Service to Children, 2022b). These books are judged based on their content and their story by the Association of Library Service to Children (ALSC), which is a division of the American Library Association; therefore, they are typically

novels (Short et al., 2017). The Caldecott medal, named after Randolph Caldecott, is also awarded annually by the ALSC, but given to an illustrator for their contribution to an outstanding picture book for children (Association for Library Service to Children, 2022d).

One way for educators to keep track of notable racially diverse books is to be informed about race-based literature awards and databases dedicated to the use of diverse literature. Scholastic published several articles listing Bilingual and Spanish books for teachers and advice on everyday application in the classroom (Scholastic, 2020; Scholastic Editors 2022). The University of Central Florida administers a database named the Showcase of Text, Archives, Research and Scholarship (STARS), which contains a library called the “Diverse Families Bookshelf” (STARS, 2022). This library is organized into four subjects—Family Relationships, LGBTQ+, Health and Disability, and Race and Culture—to easily find diverse children’s literature (STARS, 2022).

Race-based literature awards include but are not limited to the Coretta Scott King Award and the Pura Belpré Award. Until 2016, only four African Americans received a Newbery Medal despite them being awarded annually since 1922 (Association for Library Service to Children, 2022c). According to McNair (2016), the reality is not that these books do not exist, but the creation of a specialized award like this “brings attention to some titles that might not receive as much attention otherwise” (p. 377), giving acknowledgment to authors and stories underrepresented in the most notable awards. The following sections for the literature review outline five race-based literature awards, such as the Coretta Scott King Book Award, Children’s Africana Book Awards (CABA), Pure Belpré Award, Tomás Rivera Mexican American Children’s Book Award, and the Americas Award.

Race-based literature awards

Coretta Scott King Book Award

The Coretta Scott King Book Award is given annually and is named after the wife of Dr. Martin Luther King, Mrs. Coretta Scott King (American Library Association, 2022). Those who earn this award will be African American authors and/or illustrators who have produced an outstanding contribution to literature “for children and young adults that demonstrate an appreciation of African American culture and universal human values” (American Library Association, 2022). The Coretta Scott King Book Award became officially recognized by the American Library Association in 1982 although the awards have been announced and celebrated during the ALA Annual Conference since 1972 (American Library Association, 2020). A subset of this award is the John Steptoe Award for New Talent, which “affirms new talent and offers visibility for excellence in writing and/or illustration” at the beginning of their career (American Library Association, 2020). The 2022 winners of the Coretta Scott King Book Awards John Steptoe Award for New Talent Illustrator are Regis and Kahran Bethencourt, who wrote and illustrated the book *The Me I Choose to Be* (American Library Association, 2022). A full list of recipients of this award and honors dating back to 1970 can be found on the ALA website (<https://www.ala.org/rt/emiert/cskbookawards/coretta-scott-king-book-awards-all-recipients-1970-present>).

Children’s Africana Book Awards

Founded in 1989, Africa Access is an organization dedicated to “improv[ing] the quality of K-12 collections on Africa” through initiatives such as Africa Access Review, Read Africa, and the Children’s Africana Book Awards (CABA) (Africa Access, n.d.). CABA was first

presented in 1992 and is awarded annually to authors and illustrators who are recognized among the best literary contributions for children and young adults ages 4-18 on Africa (African Studies Center, 2022). Thus, there is one winner for “Young Children” and one winner for “Older Readers” each year. In 2022, the Best Book for Young Children was awarded to author Euseni Eugene Perkins and illustrator Laura Freeman for the title *Kwame Nkrumah Midnight Speech for Independence* (African Studies Center, 2022). The Best Book for Older Readers was awarded to author Safia Elhillo for the title *Home is Not a Country* (African Studies Center, 2022). Details of the nomination process and a current list of CABA awards dating back to 1991 can be found on Howard University’s CABA page (<https://cfas.howard.edu/CABA/winners-list>).

Pura Belpré Award

The Pura Belpré Award, named after “the first Latina librarian at the New York Library,” is awarded at the Annual Conference of the ALA to a Hispanic/Latino author and illustrator for children’s and young adult’s literature “whose [original] work best portrays, affirms, and celebrates the Latino culture experience” (Association for Library Service to Children, 2022a). Until 2008, the Pura Belpré award was biennially given since its founding in 1996, and eligible contenders will also have their work published either in the United States or Puerto Rico (Association for Library Service to Children, 2022a). Two titles in my own library that won Pura Belpré honors that I can confidently say represent my family’s and my own experience as Cuban Americans are *90 Miles to Havana* by Enrique Flores-Galbis and *Mango, Abuela, and Me* by Meg Medina and illustrated by Angela Dominguez. The 2021 medal for Children’s Narrative was awarded to the title *Efrén Divided*, written by Ernesto Cisneros (Association for Library Service to Children, 2021b). The 2021 medal for Youth Illustrator was awarded to *¡Vamos! Let’s*

Go Eat, illustrated by Raúl Gonzalez (Association for Library Service to Children, 2021b). A list of Pura Belpré awards and honors dating from 1996 to 2021 can be found on a PDF from the ALA website

(https://www.ala.org/alsc/sites/ala.org.alsc/files/content/awardsgrants/bookmedia/belpremedal/Belpre_winners_coms_1996-2021.pdf).

Tomás Rivera Mexican American Children's Book Award

The Tomás Rivera Mexican American Children's Book Award was created by Texas State University's College of Education to "honor authors and illustrators who create literature that depicts the Mexican American experience" (Texas State University, 2022a). Tomás Rivera is an educator, administrator, creative writer, and advocate for Mexican American literature, and is "the first Mexican American to have been selected Distinguished Alumnus at Texas State University" (Texas State University, 2021). This literature award was created to honor his legacy and love for Mexican American Literature, while celebrating the adversities, persistence, and experiences specific to Mexican American people. The three titles awarded in 2022 include *My Two Border Towns* by David Bowles (author) and Erika Meza (illustrator), *Indivisible* by Daniel Aleman, and *Bright Star* by Yuyi Morales (Texas State University, 2022b). A list of Tomás Rivera Award winners can be found at the Texas State University's website (<https://www.education.txst.edu/ci/riverabookaward/book-award-winners.html>).

Americas Award

Founded by the Consortium of Latin American Studies Program (CLASP), the Americas Award celebrates the work of authors, illustrators, and publishers who dedicate their work to producing high-quality "children's and young adult books that portray Latin America, the

Caribbean, or Latinx cultures in the United States,” and give resources for teachers to use these titles in their classrooms (CLASP, 2022). The intent is to “link the Americas” by recognizing works published in the U.S. of various genres such as poetry, fiction, folklore, and non-fiction (CLASP, 2022). The unique aspect of the Americas Award that distinguishes it from previously discussed awards is that according to its criteria, selected winners are judged on various qualifications including potential for classroom use (CLASP, 2022a). This feature of the award is an extremely valuable resource for educators who wish to truly integrate diverse texts into class time. The two award winners for 2022 are *Child of the Flower-Song People* by Gloria Amescua (author) and Duncan Tonatiuh (illustrator) and *My Two Border Towns* by David Bowles (author) and Erika Meza (illustrator), the latter of which also won a Tomás Rivera Mexican American Children’s Book Award (CLASP 2022b). A full list of award winners and honors can be found on the CLASP website (<http://claspprograms.org/pages/detail/68/Award-Winners>).

Sunshine State Young Readers Award

The Sunshine State Young Readers Award (SSYRA) is a Florida-specific reading program whose goal is to increase reading motivation in students to independently read at varying levels to improve reading fluency and encourage a love for reading (Florida Association for Media in Education, 2022a). The 15 award winners are voted on by students and evaluated from a list of 250-300 books (Florida Association for Media in Education, 2022a). Voting polls for these awards are facilitated by participating schools and are typically administered by the school’s library media specialist (Florida Association for Media in Education, 2022a). Students are eligible to vote if they are enrolled in a participating school and have read at least three of the year’s nominated books (Florida Association for Media in Education, 2022a). The SSYRA does

not base its eligibility for books on cultural diversity, but the evaluative criteria do include “Inclusion of authors from diverse...backgrounds to ensure a list representative of the diverse students across the state of Florida” (Florida Association for Media in Education, 2021).

Included in the 15 SSYRA winners for the 2022-2023 school year are *Amari and the Night Brothers* by B.B. Alston, *Archimancy Shadow School* by J. A. White, and *Concealed* by Christina Diaz Gonzalez (Florida Association for Media in Education, 2022a). The full list of 15 SSYRA books for the 2022-2023 school year can be found at the FAME website (https://www.floridamediaed.org/uploads/6/1/4/2/61420659/3-5_annotated_list_2022-2023_1.pdf).

Because the goal of this thesis is to analyze Florida standards to create an inventory list of high-quality diverse children’s literature, the following sections will discuss current Florida standards for English Language Arts and available resources to assist with implementation.

Florida Standards

This section discusses Florida’s B.E.S.T. Standards for English Language Arts. Because the purpose of this thesis was to create a standards-based inventory of elementary children’s literature, the following section provides context for the background and components of existing Florida standards.

Florida’s B.E.S.T. Standards

The K-12 Florida Standards for English Language Arts (ELA) are sourced from the Florida Benchmarks for Excellent Student Thinking (B.E.S.T.). Proposed in 2020, Governor Ron DeSantis teamed with Education Commissioner Richard Corcoran to introduce the B.E.S.T. Standards for ELA and Math (Florida Department of Education, 2020). These were implemented

as the elimination of Common Core was underway through his Executive Order 19-32, which states that one of the intentions of the B.E.S.T. Standards is to “provide a roadmap” in education “for Florida to be the most literate state in the nation” (State of Florida, 2019, p. 2).

In the B.E.S.T. Standards for ELA, mastery standards are communicated by grade level and divided into four categories: Foundations, Reading, Communication, and Vocabulary. These categories are indicated in the code of each standard using the first letter of the category (Florida Department of Education, 2020). Each category has different sets of skills that are further broken down by specific standards and grade levels. The vertical progression design lays these out, beginning with twelfth grade and ending with kindergarten, to create a vertically aligned curriculum, which is a curriculum that scaffolds students for success in these areas (Florida Department of Education, 2020).

Aside from the listed standards, the B.E.S.T. Standards handbook includes a list of recommended texts and outlines which standards they might be used to fulfill (Florida Department of Education, 2020). This furthers the goal of providing a guideline on top of stated expectations. It is emphasized that these standards and lists of texts are not intended to provide a detailed lesson plan, but rather “it is up to Florida educators to use these standards to build knowledge-rich curricula that will nurture students” (Florida Department of Education, 2020, p. 5). The following section discusses McGraw Hill’s *Reading Wonders* program, which is a curriculum resource that applies the B.E.S.T. ELA Standards (Communications Team, 2012).

McGraw Hill’s Florida Reading Wonders

McGraw Hill is an educational publisher that publishes textbooks and creates personalized learning experiences/technologies “developed with world-class authors...to meet

the needs of different teaching and learning styles” (McGraw Hill, 2021). McGraw Hill provides these resources to students and teachers from Pre-K to higher education. In 2012, McGraw Hill launched its program *Reading Wonders*, which is a K-6 reading program curriculum that was aligned with ELA Common Core State Standards (Communications Team, 2012). This program is a demonstration of equipping teachers to facilitate successful students. First implemented during the 2014-2015 school year, *Reading Wonders* provides teachers with the necessary tools to implement state standards such as educational technology, digital platforms, and reading materials (Communications Team, 2012). Further information on the *Reading Wonders* program can be found on McGraw Hill’s Website (<https://www.mheducation.com/news-media/press-releases/mcgraw-hill-education-launches-reading-wonders-first-k-6-core-reading-program-built.html>).

With the elimination of Language Arts Florida Standards (formerly known as Language Arts Common Core), McGraw Hill teamed up with members of the B.E.S.T. Standards review committee to launch the *Florida Reading Wonders*, which provides curriculum materials and a Literature Library based on the K-5 B.E.S.T. ELA Standards for students to “explore their world and become civic-minded community members” (McGraw Hill, n.d., p. 1). The Literature Library provides a “balance between literary and informational text,” instruction specialized for each grade level’s library, small group & independent lessons, and at least one B.E.S.T. selection per unit with 10-12 selections per grade (McGraw Hill, n.d., p. 1). The blend of classic and contemporary works alongside prioritizing diversity and student empowerment in their communities makes this a wonderful resource for Florida teachers.

The Importance of Diverse Literature:

Diverse Literature as a Partner in Pedagogy

Educators have a platform that many others will never have the privilege of holding. Teaching is more than the mechanics of lesson planning and teaching curriculum; teachers advocate for all students, and in turn, equip others to see themselves as agents of change (Nieto, 2013). Being equipped for these conversations in the classroom is not just dependent on the content we teach, but *how* we teach it and how culturally aware teachers are. Books can be windows into another person's life and offer valuable information to learn about the world (Bishop, 1990). Research in developmental psychology demonstrates that when a story is mediated by an adult, children can better understand the mental state of a character and "diverse perspectives and emotions" (Kucirkova, 2019, p. 8). This multidisciplinary study by literary theorists and developmental psychologists discovered that books "provide a context for practicing perspective-taking and identifying with the 'other'" (Kucirkova, 2019, p. 12). This conclusion provides a conceptual foundation for how children's literature can be used to promote empathy.

Closing the Gap

Children's literature should include all kinds of childhood experiences. Children should be able to find their 'mirrors' in the books they read and have their experiences reflected back to them (Bishop, 1990). Despite African American/Black and Hispanic/Latino people occupying millions in America's population, the Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) reported in 2021 that 13% of books they received were written about a Black/African American character, and 7% received were about a Hispanic/Latino character (Cooperative Children's Book Center,

2022). That is a stark underrepresentation and creates a gap between the people in those cultures and the books they read if there is not enough effort to find and provide those books to them.

It is not enough to only discuss books that are about these populations, but also books that are written by members of these communities. The Cooperative Children's Book Center additionally provides that out of the books reviewed in 2021, 9% were written by a Black/African American author and approximately 10% by a Hispanic/Latino Author (Cooperative Children's Book Center, 2022). The lack of authors from these communities creates a compounding issue with the lack of diverse books in creating authentic literature. In an interview with children's author, Meg Medina, whose books reflect and celebrate Latino culture, she emphasizes the importance of having diverse authors writing diverse books because authentic representation is magnified when the stories are written by the people who have walked down those paths (*Politics and Prose*, 2013).

Students within ethnic and racial minorities need to see themselves in the stories they read. Children are more likely to engage with and enjoy reading books when they identify with the characters, themes, and/or interests present in the story (Ford et al., 2018). Progress has been made in creating more diverse literature, but since the number of these books is not produced as much as Eurocentric books (Cooperative Children's Book Center, 2022), it is required to invest time and energy in finding high-quality, diverse books for classroom libraries. Rudine Sims Bishop (1990) discusses the situation that arises when students either have an absence of representation or inaccurate/stereotypical representation. She notes that it teaches a "powerful lesson" about how their groups are devalued in society, leading to low self-esteem. According to the International Literacy Association, "Children have the right to read texts that mirror their

experiences and languages, provide windows into the lives of others, and open doors into our diverse world” (n.d.). The ILA’s *Children’s Rights to Read* can be found on their website (<https://www.literacyworldwide.org/docs/default-source/resource-documents/ila-childrens-rights-to-read.pdf>). It is our responsibility to ensure these rights are fulfilled.

Being exposed to diverse literature provides a gateway into outside perspectives that you would not otherwise experience. Students need access to stories that will teach them about the diverse world they live in as well as how they are connected to everyone else (Bishop, 1990). Although I have gone through experiences that are unique to being Latina, I recognize that there are groups within my own community that went through things I will never have to endure. For example, the book *90 Miles to Havana* by Enrique Flores-Galbis (YR) is a historical fiction novel that follows two brothers immigrating from Cuba to Miami during the Pedro Operation in 1960 (2010). My grandparents immigrated from Cuba around that time as well, and this book gave me a direct perspective on what they went through and made me feel more connected to them. One of these types of primary books, such as *90 Miles to Havana*, made me understand the importance of having representation in literature. As someone who already knew the history of how and why they arrived, a book like this could provide both historical knowledge and connections to humanity for those who do not.

The benefits of integrating diverse literature in classroom instruction are not limited to social-emotional learning. *Reading Plus* (Reading Plus Research, 2016), an adaptive literacy program, conducted a study in which a national sample of K-12 students was evaluated for variables involved in reading motivation, interest, confidence, and reading comprehension. Results indicated that reading motivation and proficiency have a positive relationship with each

other, meaning reading proficiency can increase when the student is highly motivated and/or interested in what they're reading (Reading Plus Research, 2016). One way for children to increase literacy achievement and motivation to read is by having access to multicultural literature (Gunn et al., 2022). When students connect with the literature they read, they have higher motivation to read it.

How does this thesis contribute to the conversation?

Together, Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students make up 56%, the majority, of Florida's public school enrollment in the 2021-22 school year (Florida Department of Education, 2022). The underproduction and underrepresentation of diverse texts demonstrate that more attention needs to be invested in finding these books and providing them to our students (Cooperative Children's Book Center, 2022). The responsibility is placed on Florida educators to use the B.E.S.T. Standards as a framework to fuel their lesson planning, yet the recommended lists provided are not optimal for teachers who also desire to find ways to connect to their students and prioritize creating opportunities for diversity and representation.

The first step that can be taken in closing these gaps is to create and apply diverse libraries in our schools and classrooms. Students of color and/or students living in poverty are less likely to have access to "high-quality standards-aligned materials," causing a disparity in these socioeconomic groups (EdReports, 2021). This thesis utilized and expanded on the lists provided by the B.E.S.T. Standards to create a practical resource for teachers to use culturally diverse texts that align with Florida Standards. Nonfiction books are included, but due to the lack of diverse fiction in the B.E.S.T. recommended list of texts, there was a heavy focus on selecting fiction books. In being mindful of the limitations in time, the focus was mainly on primary (K-2)

grades. Therefore, the product of this thesis expanded on existing Florida's B.E.S.T. Elementary Standards list of recommended texts through the creation of an inventory list of elementary K-2 children's literature with culturally diverse protagonists to serve as a practical resource for elementary teachers to use in their classrooms.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Research Goals

To meet the goals of the thesis, I curated a standards-based inventory list of high-quality primary elementary fiction books by and about African American/Black and Hispanic/Latino characters that were tailored for and will be distributed to several Orange County Elementary Schools through the University of Central Florida's Teacher Quality Partnerships program (TQP). This curation was done by including and expanding on the recommended text lists from Florida's B.E.S.T. Standards for ELA, databases provided by Scholastic and STARS at UCF, and notable race-based and local literary awards. The inclusion of these databases and awards aided in determining whether the chosen books are of high quality. These national race-based and local awards included the SSYRA, Pura Belpré, Tomás Rivera Mexican American Children's Book Award, Americas Award, Coretta Scott King Book Award, and the Children's Africana Book Awards.

For further assurance of quality and being mindful of anti-bias practices, books included in the inventory were selected with guidance from checklists and guidelines such as the Diverse Classroom Library Checklist (Lavalee, 2018; see Appendix A) and the Checklist for Assessing Children's Literature (Anti-Bias Education, 2022; see Appendix B). Elements from each checklist were used to evaluate each book included in the inventory to prevent the inclusion of texts that promote stereotypes and false representation. I included a customized list to specify which elements were used in these precautions in Appendix C. Casey Lavalee's Classroom Library Checklist is extremely helpful in curating a diverse classroom library that represents many different cultures (2018; see Appendix A), however, I did not include all

questions/statements from it since my focus was on African American/Black and Hispanic/Latino literature. The customized checklist I used that combines these two resources can be found in Appendix C.

This inventory list exhibited how each section can be used with Florida ELA standards through a table that mirrors the Sample Texts by Benchmarks tables found in the B.E.S.T. Standards for ELA handbook (Florida Department of Education, 2020; see Appendix D for example). For distribution, an infographic was created with the intent for teachers to be able to display it for easy access in their classrooms. This infographic contained notable information from sections of this Literature Review and a QR code that directs teachers to the full inventory list and correlating Benchmarks tables. This information allowed teachers to have access to all primary grade levels (K-2) should they ever switch classrooms or desire to pass the information along to others. The purpose of this thesis product is to provide a resource from which teachers may reference to choose high-quality multicultural literature for various cultures represented in their classrooms. It must be clarified, however, that this is simply a guide on *adding* these to a classroom library; these books should not be the *only* books in these libraries. Yet, it remains important for our elementary students to be exposed to diverse topics in addition to cultures and experiences different from theirs, which can expand their view of the world and empathy for others (Blintt, 2022).

Ethical Considerations

Research involving human subjects is required to undergo approval through the Institutional Review Board (IRB). This includes experiments, interviews, surveys, etc. Since my methodology does not include interactions with humans and data for school demographics are

public information, this project did not need to go through IRB approval. Still, the identities of any schools, students, teachers, faculty, and/or other participants that are directly involved with my research were kept confidential.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS OF MY RESEARCH

This chapter begins with a demographics analysis of the recommended texts included in the B.E.S.T. ELA Handbook for both lower and upper elementary. It also includes my curated inventory list of multicultural K-2 literature as well as tables for each grade level list that outlines the standards each book fulfills.

Demographics Analysis of B.E.S.T. ELA Recommended Texts

After analyzing the recommended text lists from the B.E.S.T. ELA Handbook, I discovered the following (Florida Department of Education, 2020):

- 12% of recommended stories for lower elementary and 29% for upper elementary included lead characters/protagonists that are African American/Black, Hispanic/Latino, or Native American.
- Of these diverse lead characters/protagonists, 57% are nonfiction texts, meaning a little under 9% of the total number of books on these lists are both culturally diverse and a fictional genre.

Below are pie chart graphs illustrating these statistics:

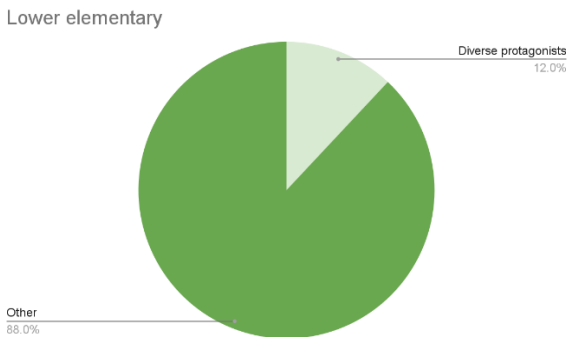


Figure 1: Diverse protagonists in lower elementary B.E.S.T. ELA recommended texts

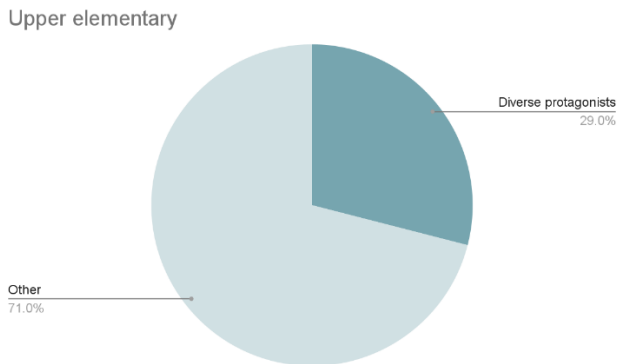


Figure 2: Diverse protagonists in upper elementary B.E.S.T. ELA recommended texts

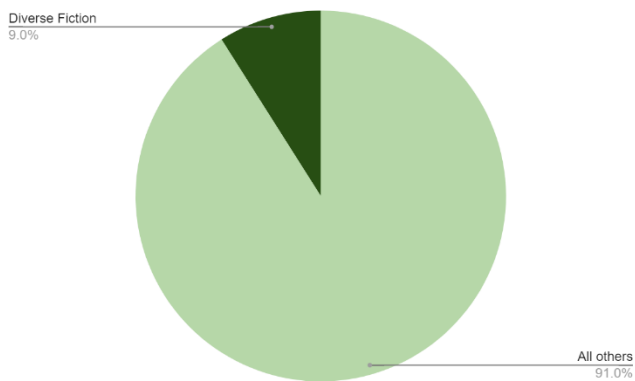


Figure 3: Books containing diverse protagonists and fiction in full B.E.S.T. ELA list of recommended texts

Standards-Based Inventory List of K-2 Literature

The following list includes children's literature that I found was appropriate for the K-2 grade levels according to the grade levels' standards outlined in the B.E.S.T. ELA Standards Handbook. These books were written by and/or contain protagonists that are African American/Black and Hispanic/Latino. Each book was selected from the lists of medal and honor winners from the Sunshine State Young Readers Award, Pura Belpré, Tomás Rivera Mexican American Children's Book Award, Americas Award, Coretta Scott King Book Award, and the Children's Africana Book Awards. For each book, I included the title, author/illustrator, publisher and year of publication, cover photo, awards won, and a brief plot summary. This gives

teachers the basic information they will need to make first judgements on whether these books are right for their classrooms.

In producing this thesis product, it is important to be aware of the harmful stereotypes that exist in some children's literature, especially in older works. Books like *Peter Pan* by J.M. Barrie have stereotypical depictions of Native Americans that, in the mind of a child, could create a single, distorted image of Native Americans. Much of Western literature depicts African communities in a way that creates a single image of poverty-ridden, sick, helpless people (Adichie, 2009). Novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie discusses that "to insist on only these negative stories is to flatten my experience and to overlook the many other stories that formed me (12:53, 2009)." It was necessary for my research goals that I am aware of these stereotypes and approach these selections with a critical eye. For each book, I prioritized the exclusion of harmful stereotypes by utilizing the Diverse Classroom Library Checklist (Lavalee, 2018; see Appendix A) and the Checklist for Assessing Children's Literature (Anti-Bias Education, 2022; see Appendix B).

Kindergarten

The following list of books is appropriate for the kindergarten grade level. Books in this grade level were chosen according to the grade level standards through the B.E.S.T. ELA Handbook. This was done by looking through each benchmark for the grade level while reading each book and discerning the focus grade level for use. Books of shorter length and with simpler vocabulary are included here, but most should be used in a read-aloud context, which allows teachers to "model reading strategies," which supports the acquisition of literacy skills and strategies for primary school students (Wright, p, 7, 2019).

Sing to the Moon

Written by Nansubuga Nagadya Isdahl, Illustrated by Sandra van Doorn

Published by Lantana Publishing, Illustrated edition in October 2018

Genre: Realistic Fiction, Poetry

Awards: Children's Africana Book Awards (CABA) Winner, 2021

Synopsis: A Ugandan boy explores what he would wish for after his grandpa Jjajja tells him to sing his wishes to the moon. His explorative imagination is evident in what he dreams of wishing for. The boy and Jjajja spend a rainy day inside, and despite the boy's gloomy outlook on the day, Jjajja keeps both of them busy with things to do in the house and sharing tales of old memories and African stories. The boy soon learns that exciting adventures are not just for his imagination.

Me & Mama

Written and Illustrated by Cozbi A. Cabrera

Published by Denene Millner Books/Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, Illustrated edition, August 2020

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Awards: Caldecott Medal 2021, Coretta Scott King Book Award 2021 Illustrator Honor Book

Synopsis: A little girl describes her relationship with her mama as they spend the day together. Rich descriptive language is used to describe elements of the day, and the little girl shares with the reader what she sees as commonalities and differences between her and her mother.

Drum Dream Girl: How One Girl's Courage Changed Music

Written by Margarita Engle, Illustrated by Rafael Lopez

Published by Dreamscape Media, Unabridged edition, May 2016

Genre: Historical Fiction, Poetry

Awards: Pura Belpré 2016 Medal Winner for Illustration

Synopsis: Inspired by a Chinese-African-Cuban girl named Millo Zaldarriaga, this story goes through the experience of a little girl breaking the taboos in Cuba of girl drummers. The story highlights her longing to play the drums and the backlash she faces anytime she expresses it.

My Two Border Towns

Written by David Bowles, Illustrated by Erika Meza

Published by Penguin Young Readers Group, September 2021

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Awards: Américas Award Winner 2022, Tomás Rivera Book Award Winner 2022

Synopsis: This story follows a boy and his father as they go on their weekly trip across the border. The boy shows the readers the similarities between his hometown and his "twin town" in the States and introduces us to his family and refugee friends.

If Dominican Were a Color

Written by Sili Recio, Illustrated by Brianna McCarthy

Published by Denene Millner Books/Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, Illustrated edition, September 2020

Genre: Realistic Fiction, Poetry

Awards: Américas Award Honorable Mention 2021

Synopsis: This poetic story highlights Dominican culture by showing the diversity in colors of people, nature, food, and music.

Just a Minute!: A Trickster Tale and Counting Book

Written and Illustrated by Yuyi Morales

Published by Chronicle Books, Reprint edition, March 2016

Genre: Fiction, Folklore

Awards: Tomás Rivera Book Award Winner 2004, Pura Belpré Award 2004

Synopsis: Señor Calavera comes to visit Grandma Beetle unexpectedly. He wants her to leave with him, but she has many things left to do in the house before she can leave. Señor Calavera becomes frustrated at all the things Grandma Beetle has left to do. When all of her grandchildren arrive, Señor Calavera realizes he is the tenth guest at Grandma Beetle's birthday party.

Nana Akua Goes to School

Written by Tricia Walker, Illustrated by April Harrison

Published by Schartz & Wade Books, 2020

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Awards: Children's Africana Book Award (CABA) Winner for Best Book for Young Readers 2021

Synopsis: Grandparents' Day is approaching at Zura's class! Zura adores her Nana Akua but fears that her Nana won't be accepted by others because of how different African culture is. Nana Akua knows all Zura's classmates need is to be taught her family's culture so they can understand someone who grew up differently from them. Together, they teach the class about their African culture and the students celebrate with them.

Federico and the Wolf

Written by Rebecca J. Gomez, Illustrated by Elisa Chavarri

Published by Clarion Books, Illustrated edition, May 2020

Genre: Fiction, Folklore Variant, Poetry

Awards: Sunshine State Young Readers Award (SSYRA) Jr. 2021-22 Winner

Synopsis: A play on the classic *Little Red Ridinghood*, a boy named Federico sets off to get ingredients to make delicious pico de gallo for his grandfather. On the way home, he comes across a hungry wolf who wants some of his food. The hungry wolf sets out to follow the boy, but the boy doesn't give up very easily.

First Grade

The following books are appropriate for the first-grade level. Books in this grade level were chosen according to the grade level standards through the B.E.S.T. ELA Handbook. This

was done by looking through each benchmark for the grade level while reading each book and discerning which grade level it could best be used for. Books of varying lengths and more complex themes are included here.

It Takes a Village

Written and Illustrated by Jane Cowen-Fletcher

Published by Scholastic, January 1994

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Awards: Children's Africana Book Awards Winner 1995

Synopsis: Based on the West African proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child." Big sister Yemi watches over her little brother Koukou. As she finds out how difficult it can be to take care of Koukou, she soon realizes she is not alone in taking care of him.

Last Stop on Market Street

Written by Matt de la Peña, Illustrated by Christian Robinson

Published by Penguin Books, 2015

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Awards: Coretta Scott King Book Awards 2016 Illustrator Honor Book, Newbery Medal 2016, Caldecott Honor Book 2016

Synopsis: A young boy named CJ gets insight from his grandmother on a bus ride through the city on how to find the beauty in common things. Together, they meet all kinds of people, and CJ learns about people who are different than him.

Dancing Hands: How Teresa Carreño Played the Piano for President Lincoln

Written by Margarita Engle, Illustrated by Rafael López

Published by Atheneum Books for Young Readers, August 2019

Genre: Non-fiction Biography

Awards: Pura Belpré Medal Winner for illustration, 2020

Synopsis: Teresa Carreño is a brilliantly talented pianist who as a child, had to flee from Venezuela to the United States due to the revolution—only to find the U.S. was in a Civil War. Music is what brought light to her days, and she decided to play for others to do the same.

Between Us and Abuela: A Family Story from the Border

Written by Mitali Perkins, Illustrated by Sara Palacios

Published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux (BYR), Illustrated edition, September 2019

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Awards: Américas Award Winner 2020

Synopsis: As they approach the Christmas season, Maria and Juan travel to visit their grandma at the California-Mexico border. They get to spend quality time at the border fence, exchanging gifts and stories. In this reunion, Maria has a wonderful idea of how to get Juan's large gift for Abuela past the fence.

Maybe Something Beautiful: How Art Transformed a Neighborhood

Written by Isabel Campoy and Theresa Howell, Illustrated by Rafael López

Published by Clarion Books, Illustrated Edition, April 2016

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Awards: Tomás Rivera Book Award Winner 2017

Synopsis: Mira and her neighbors discover the beauty of their neighborhood through transforming it into art.

The Talking Baobab Tree

Written and illustrated by Nelda LaTeef

Published by Sub-Saharan Publishers, January 2020

Genre: Traditional Literature, Folklore

Awards: Children's Africana Book Awards (CABA) Honor Book for Young Children 2021

Synopsis: Based on Senegalese folktales, a rabbit and a tree overcome the challenges of a selfish hyena.

Kamala and Maya's Big Idea

Written by Meena Harris, Illustrated by Ana Ramírez González

Published by Balzer + Bray, Illustrated Edition, June 2020

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Awards: SSYRA Jr. 2021-22 Winner

Synopsis: Kamala and Maya have a big idea. They want to build a playground! When the adults in their life do not want to help, they campaign and gain the support of other resident kids who live in their building to help them make this idea become reality.

T-Bone the Drone

Written and illustrated by Shonda McCloskey

Published by Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, September 2019

Genre: Realistic Fiction, Graphic Novel

Awards: SSYRA Jr. 2020-21 Winner

Synopsis: In this beautifully illustrated graphic novel, Lucas and T-Bone the Drone are best friends. When Lucas tries to join his friends' wiffle ball game, he ends up on the sidelines after T-Bone causes some trouble in knocking their only ball over the fence. Lucas has the brilliant idea of using T-Bone to look over the fence and retrieve the ball, and they both get to save the game and join the team again.

Second Grade

The following books are appropriate for the second-grade level. Books in this grade level were chosen according to the grade-level benchmarks outlined in the B.E.S.T. ELA Handbook.

This was done by looking through each benchmark for the grade level while reading each book

and discerning which grade level it could best be used for. Books of varying lengths and more complex themes are included here to prepare students for upper elementary. It is encouraged to continue using these in a read-aloud context to further their development of literacy skills (Wright, 2019).

Desmond and the Very Mean Word: A Story of Forgiveness

Written by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Douglas Carlton Abrams, Illustrated by A.G. Ford
Published by Candlewick, December 2012

Genre: Historical Fiction

Awards: Children's Africana Book Award (CABA) Winner 2014

Synopsis: In a fictional story based on true events from the childhood of Desmond Tutu, Desmond goes on a bicycle ride in his South African town when a group of boys shouts a very mean word at him. His response is to retaliate with another mean word, and when that doesn't make him feel better, Desmond is taught an important lesson on forgiveness and healing.

We Wait for the Sun

Written by Dovey Johnson Roundtree and Katie McCabe, Illustrated by Raissa Figueroa
Published by Roaring Brook Press, February 2021

Genre: Nonfiction Biography

Awards: Coretta Scott King Book Award 2022 Illustrator Honor Book

Synopsis: This story is a beloved memory of Dovey J. Roundtree's childhood with her grandmother. Young Dovey and her grandmother set out through the woods to find the perfect blackberries to pick and bring home. On their way home, they watch the sunrise and have a moment of peace together.

La Princesa and the Pea

Written by Susan Middleton Elya, Illustrated by Juana Martinez-Neal

Published by G.P. Putnam's Sons Books for Young Readers, Bilingual edition, September 2017

Genre: Fiction, Fairytale

Awards: Pura Belpré Medal Winner for Illustration, 2018

Synopsis: A retelling of the story *The Princess and the Pea*. The queen does not agree with the prince's choice of his future wife, so she has a plan to see if the girl he loves is really a princess.

My Papi Has a Motorcycle

Written by Isabel Quintero, Illustrated by Zeke Peña

Published by Penguin Young Readers Group, May 2019

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Awards: Pura Belpré Honor Book for Illustration, 2020, Américas Award Honorable Mention 2021, Tomás Rivera Book Award Winner 2022

Synopsis: Daisy and her Papi (dad) go on an adventure in their vibrant neighborhood on her Papi's motorcycle to visit all the places she loves to go. The story also highlights the love between a daughter and her father.

Digging for Words: José Alberto Gutiérrez and the Library He Built

Written by Angela Burke Kunkel, Illustrated by Paola Escobar

Published by Schwartz & Wade, September 2020

Genre: Nonfiction Biography

Awards: Américas Award Winner 2021

Synopsis: José Alberto Gutiérrez was a garbage collector in Bogotá, Colombia. At night, he searches through thrown-out books to add to his collection. He keeps these books in his home to create his own library every Saturday called Paradise.

Dreamers

Written and Illustrated by Yuyi Morales

Published by Neal Porter Books, September 2018

Genre: Nonfiction Biography

Awards: Tomás Rivera Book Award Winner 2019

Synopsis: a woman and her child one day find themselves needing to leave their home to pursue a better life—they become immigrants. This story follows the basics on the experience of immigrants and how they look forward to what they will become in their new home. They are more than immigrants; they are dreamers.

African Proverbs for All Ages

Written (Collected) by Johnnetta Betsch Cole and Nelda LaTeef, Illustrated by Nelda LaTeef

Published by Roaring Book Press, November 2021

Genre: Sayings

Awards: Children's Africana Book Awards Honor Book for Young Children 2022

Synopsis: The book is introduced at the beginning by introducing the concept of proverbs and how they are formed. This book introduces proverbs by presenting the reader with proverbs from many African cultures. Each page contains four proverbs and one illustration, and students may be prompted to think about which proverb the illustrations are about through the use of context clues.

Mia Mayhem is a Superhero!

Written by Kara West, Illustrated by Leeza Hernandez

Published by Little Simon, Illustrated edition, December 2018

Genre: Adventure Fiction

Awards: SSYRA Jr. 2019-20 Winner

Synopsis: Mia is living a normal life until she finds out she's from a family of superheroes!! Follow Mia's journey as she navigates keeping this new secret, balancing her normal life, and learning the ins and outs of being a superhero!

Inventory List Texts by Benchmark

The following section includes tables that are modeled after the Sample Texts by Standard tables found in the B.E.S.T. ELA Standards Handbook for each grade level. These tables include the text titles on the leftmost column and each grade level standard along the top row. Dots in each cell indicate which standards each text can be used to fulfill.

Figure 4: Sample texts by benchmark (Kindergarten)

	ELA.K.R.1.1	ELA.K.R.1.3	ELA.K.R.1.4	ELA.K.R.2.1	ELA.K.R.2.2	ELA.K.R.2.4	ELA.K.R.3.1	ELA.K.R.3.2	ELA.K.R.3.3
	Describe the main character(s), setting, and important events in a story.	Explain the roles of author and illustrator of a story.	Identify rhyme in a poem.	Use titles, headings, and illustrations to predict and confirm the topic of texts.	Identify the topic of and multiple details in a text.	Explain the difference between opinions and facts about a topic.	Identify and explain descriptive words in text(s).	Retell a text orally to enhance comprehension.	Compare and contrast characters' experiences in stories.
<i>Sing to the Moon</i> by Nansubuga Nagadya Isdahl	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•
<i>Mama and Me</i> by Cozbi A. Cabrera	•	•		•	•		•	•	•
<i>Drum Dream Girl</i> by Margarita Engle	•	•		•	•		•	•	•
<i>My Two Border Towns</i> by David Bowles	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•
<i>If Dominican Were a Color</i> by Sili Recio	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•
<i>Just a Minute: A Trickster Tale and Counting Book</i> by Yuyi Morales	•	•		•	•		•	•	•
<i>Nana Akua Goes to School</i> by Tricia Walker	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•

(Kindergarten Continued)

	ELA.K.R.1 .1	ELA.K.R.1.3	ELA.K.R.1.4	ELA.K.R.2.1	ELA.K.R.2.2	ELA.K.R.2.4	ELA.K.R.3.1	ELA.K.R.3.2	ELA.K.R.3.3
	Describe the main character(s), setting, and important events in a story.	Explain the roles of author and illustrator of a story.	Identify rhyme in a poem.	Use titles, headings, and illustrations to predict and confirm the topic of texts.	Identify the topic of and multiple details in a text.	Explain the difference between opinions and facts about a topic.	Identify and explain descriptive words in text(s).	Retell a text orally to enhance comprehension.	Compare and contrast characters' experiences in stories.
<i>Federico and the Wolf</i> by Rebecca J. Gomez	•	•	•	•	•		•	•	•

Figure 5: Sample texts by benchmark (1st Grade)

	ELA.1. R.1.1	ELA. 1.R.1. 2	ELA.1. R.1.3	ELA .1.R. 1.4	ELA.1.R.2.1	ELA.1. R.2.2	ELA.1.R.2.3	ELA.1. R.2.4	ELA.1. R.3.1	ELA.1.R. 3.2	ELA.1.R. .3.3
	Identify and describe the main story elements to a story.	Identify and explain the moral of a story.	Explain who is telling the story using context clues.	Identify stanzas and line breaks in poems.	Use text features including titles, headings, captions, graphs, maps, glossaries, and/or illustrations to demonstrate understanding of texts.	Identify the topic of and relevant details in a text.	Explain similarities and differences between information provided in visuals and words in an informational text.	Identify an author's opinion(s) about the topic.	Identify and explain descriptive words and phrases in text(s).	Retell a text in oral or written form to enhance comprehension.	Compare and contrast two texts on the same topic.
<i>It Takes a Village</i> by Jane Cowen-Fletcher	•	•	•		•	•		•		•	
<i>Last Stop on Market Street</i> by Matt de la Peña	•	•	•		•	•			•	•	
<i>Dancing Hands: How Teresa Carreño Played the Piano for President Lincoln</i> by Margarita Engle	•	•	•		•	•	•		•	•	
<i>Between Us and Abuela</i> by Mitali Perkins	•	•	•		•	•			•	•	

(1st Grade Continued)

	ELA.1. R.1.1	ELA. 1.R.1. 2	ELA.1. R.1.3	ELA .1.R. 1.4	ELA.1.R.2.1	ELA.1. R.2.2	ELA.1.R.2.3	ELA.1. R.2.4	ELA.1. R.3.1	ELA.1.R. 3.2	ELA.1.R. .3.3
	Identify and describe the main story elements to a story.	Identify and explain the moral of a story.	Explain who is telling the story using context clues.	Identify stanzas and line breaks in poems.	Use text features including titles, headings, captions, graphs, maps, glossaries, and/or illustrations to demonstrate understanding of texts.	Identify the topic of and relevant details in a text.	Explain similarities and differences between information provided in visuals and words in an informational text.	Identify an author's opinion(s) about the topic.	Identify and explain descriptive words and phrases in text(s).	Retell a text in oral or written form to enhance comprehension.	Compare and contrast two texts on the same topic.
<i>Maybe Something Beautiful: How Art Transformed a Neighborhood</i> by Isabel Campoy and Theresa Howell	•	•	•		•	•	•		•	•	•
<i>The Talking Baobab Tree</i> by Nelda LaTeef	•	•	•		•	•			•	•	•
<i>Kamala and Maya's Big Idea</i> by Meena Harris	•	•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	
<i>T-Bone the Drone</i> by Shanda McCloskey	•	•	•		•	•	•		•	•	

Figure 6: Sample texts by benchmark (2nd Grade)

	ELA.2.R.1.1	ELA.2.R.1.2	ELA.2.R.1.3	ELA.2.R.1.4	ELA.2.R.2.1	ELA.2.R.2.2	ELA.2.R.2.3	ELA.2.R.2.4	ELA.2.R.3.1	ELA.2.R.3.2	ELA.2.R.3.3
	Identify plot structure and describe main story elements in a literary text.	Identify and explain a theme of a literary text.	Identify different characters' perspectives in a literary text	Identify rhyme schemes in poems.	Explain how text features—including titles, headings, captions, graphs, maps, glossaries, and/or illustrations—contribute to the meaning of texts.	Identify the central idea and relevant details in a text.	Explain an author's purpose in an informational text.	Explain an author's opinion(s) and supporting evidence.	Identify and explain similes, idioms, and alliteration in text(s).	Retell a text to enhance comprehension.	Compare and contrast important details presented by two texts on the same topic or theme.
<i>Desmond and the Very Mean Word: A Story of Forgiveness</i> by Desmond Tutu and Douglas Abrams	•	•	•		•	•	•	•		•	•
<i>We Wait for the Sun</i> by Dovey Johnson Roundtree & Katie McCabe	•	•	•		•	•	•			•	
<i>La Princesa and the Pea</i> by Susan Middleton Elya	•	•	•	•	•	•			•	•	
<i>My Papi Has a Motorcycle</i> by Isabel Quintero	•	•	•		•	•			•	•	

(2nd Grade Continued)

	ELA.2.R.1.1	ELA.2.R.1.2	ELA.2.R.1.3	ELA.2.R.1.4	ELA.2.R.2.1	ELA.2.R.2.2	ELA.2.R.2.3	ELA.2.R.2.4	ELA.2.R.3.1	ELA.2.R.3.2	ELA.2.R.3.3
	Identify plot structure and describe main story elements in a literary text.	Identify and explain a theme of a literary text.	Identify different characters' perspectives in a literary text	Identify rhyme schemes in poems.	Explain how text features—including titles, headings, captions, graphs, maps, glossaries, and/or illustrations—contribute to the meaning of texts.	Identify the central idea and relevant details in a text.	Explain an author's purpose in an informational text.	Explain an author's opinion(s) and supporting evidence.	Identify and explain similes, idioms, and alliteration in text(s).	Retell a text to enhance comprehension.	Compare and contrast important details presented by two texts on the same topic or theme.
<i>Digging for Words</i> by Angela Burke Kunkel	•	•	•		•	•			•		
<i>Dreamers</i> by Yuyi Morales	•	•	•		•	•			•	•	
<i>African Proverbs for All Ages</i> by Johnnetta Betsch Cole		•			•	•	•	•			
<i>Mia Mayhem is a Superhero</i> by Kara West	•	•	•		•	•				•	

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND NEXT STEPS

Legislative Barriers for Public Schools

In the summer of 2022, Governor Ron DeSantis enacted HB 1467, which outlines several changes in the responsibilities of Florida’s school districts and public schools, several of which details a new approval process of literary texts for classroom use (Florida House of Representatives, 2022). Of these responsibilities, it is now required under law that all books students might access “through a school district library media center or included in a recommended or assigned school or grade-level reading list must be selected by a school district employee who holds a valid educational media specialist certificate” (Florida House of Representatives, p. 6-7 2022).

In the context of this thesis, this legislation is a barrier educators will need to be mindful of if they wish to implement any books from the K-2 standards-based inventory list. It may be in some cases that some of these books are already approved by their school’s media specialist, but in cases where they are not, they will need to undergo the approval process before implementing them in classroom instruction. All books listed in the B.E.S.T. ELA Handbook benchmark tables and appendices should be considered approved, since those lists are directly from the state. The full PDF of HB 1467 with more details on these requirements can be found online (<https://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2022/1467/BillText/er/PDF>).

Revisiting the Role of Diverse Literature as a Partner in Pedagogy

For easy distribution to teachers, I created an infographic using Canva. This can be found in this section as well as Appendix E. It highlights key points in why teachers should prioritize including diverse texts in their classrooms. These key points are directly pulled from arguments made in the section in Chapter Two titled *The Importance of Diverse Literature*. It also includes a QR code at the bottom that links to a PDF document of the book list standards-based inventory list by benchmark tables listed in the above section of this thesis. This will be the primary mode of distribution for this inventory list of K-2 multicultural children's literature.

Any sources cited on the infographic will be fully referenced on the reference page in the linked document from the QR code. This infographic allows for easy distribution to schools serving high needs populations and can be printed and displayed in teachers' classrooms as well as be saved in digital formats. The link to the PDF that the QR code links to can be found here (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1B345uQTLORGZ-ZfqIECaO6LQR1UkDCIW/view?usp=sharing>).

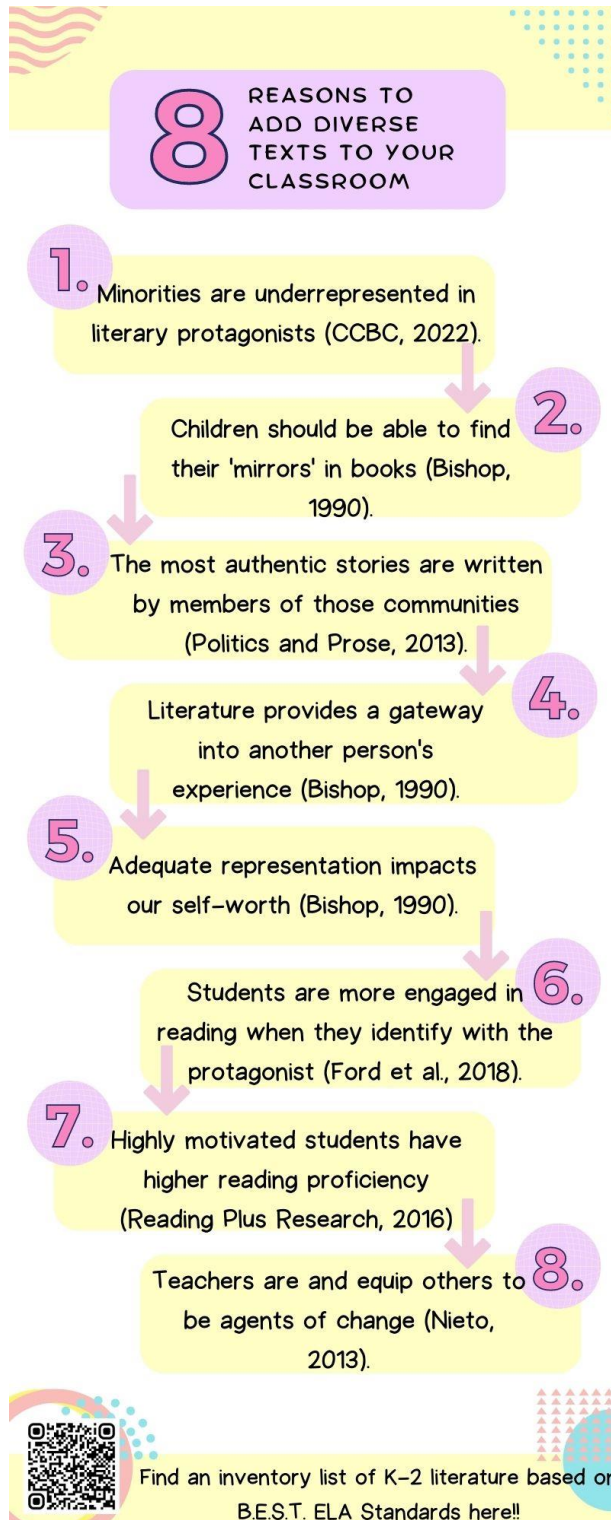


Figure 7: Shareable infographic

Next Steps

The core of this thesis is to highlight the importance of including books in classroom libraries that students can see themselves in. Any given classroom may have a wide range of demographics, but this thesis was mainly focused on African American and Hispanic children's literature because those are the most dominant demographics enrolled in our public schools, and furthermore the schools involved with the Teacher Quality Partnership at UCF (Florida Department of Education, 2022). This thesis serves as a starting point for teachers to be able to know the resources available to them within these demographics and see that these books can be used to fulfill state ELA standards.

Since my results were to create a resource for teachers to be able to reference and use, it is important that I share my research with other teachers in Florida. Furthermore, it is important that I share my research with schools that serve high needs populations and have high numbers of diverse students enrolled. Within the University of Central Florida's College of Community Innovation and Education, there is a program called Teacher Quality Partnerships (TQP) in which UCF and Orange County Public Schools "collaborate to align resources and support for teacher candidates," one of which is a curriculum resource geared toward culturally responsive teaching (University of Central Florida, 2022a). The primary route that I will share my research in my next steps will be through the TQP partner schools.

The partner schools within TQP have dominantly African American/Black and Hispanic/Latino enrollment. These schools are Catalina Elementary, Ivey Lane Elementary, Academic Center for Excellence, Eccleston Elementary, and Union Park Elementary (University of Central Florida, 2022b). Among these schools, their demographics were averaged to a final

result of an average minority enrollment of 94%, of which 67% are African American/Black and 25.6% are Hispanic/Latino (U.S. News & World Report, 2021a, 2021b, 2021c, 2021d, 2021e). These schools are great examples of Florida public schools that could greatly benefit from having more diverse books in their classrooms that are more representative of their students.

Again, Florida public school enrollment shows a 56% enrollment rate of African American/Black and Hispanic/Latino students combined (Florida Department of Education, 2022). The CCBC reported 13% African American/Black protagonists and 9% Hispanic/Latino protagonists in the books they received (2022). Additionally, they received books which 9% were written by African American/Black authors and 10% by Hispanic/Latino authors (Cooperative Children's Book Center, 2022). In the recommended texts in the B.E.S.T. ELA Handbook, 12% of recommended stories for lower elementary and 29% for upper elementary included lead characters/protagonists that are African American/Black, Hispanic/Latino, or Native American (Florida Department of Education, 2020). As stated above, the demographics of partner schools in the Teacher Quality Partnership average to approximately 94% minority enrollment (U.S. News & World Report, 2021a, 2021b, 2021c, 2021d, 2021e). The creation of this inventory list is just the start to a necessary change that must occur if we are to set an example of prioritizing finding diverse texts to provide to our students.

The next clear step for this research is publication. I will share my research by publishing it to UCF's STARS library first, as it is included in the process of completing the Honors Undergraduate Thesis program through which this thesis was written. Next, I will work with my committee to submit my research for publication to journals that will increase the likelihood of classroom teachers seeing my work. The journals recommended to me were the Florida Literacy

Journal and the Journal of Florida Association of Teacher Education (JFATE), all of which are more commonly accessed by my target population of elementary classroom teachers. This will be explored more this upcoming summer for possible publication in these journals in the Fall.

APPENDIX A: DIVERSE CLASSROOM LIBRARY CHECKLIST

1. Are there books for children at different reading levels and abilities?
2. Are there a variety of time periods/settings present in the library?
3. Does the library have a balance of genres: fiction (historical, realistic, fantasy) and nonfiction (informational and biography)?
4. Do students in the class have a way to recommend new books for the classroom collection?
5. Does every child have books in the library where they can see themselves represented?
6. Are there new books added frequently based on the cultures of students in the classroom?
7. Does the library give children the opportunity to see individuals who are different from themselves to encourage acceptance of diversity?
8. Do the books communicate that every culture is composed of individuals?
9. Are the text's details, language, and illustrations aligned with the cultural group that is intended to be depicted?
10. Do the books in the library avoid stereotypes/bias?
11. Does the library encourage children to read a range of books about the same cultural group that are written from different perspectives?
12. Are there books written by authors who have an inside perspective/first-hand expertise in the cultural group?
13. Do the books in the library accurately represent the beliefs, values, and lives of the cultural group that is intended to be depicted?

14. Does the library contain a variety of award-winning books such as the Newbery Award, Caldecott Award, Geisel Award, Sibert Informational Book Award, Orbis Pictus Award, Scott O'Dell Award, or the Boston Globe-Horn Book Award?
15. Does the library contain Africa and African American themes such as books recognized by the Coretta Scott King Award or Africa Access?
16. Does the library contain American Indian themes such as books that are recognized 24 by The American Indian Library Association?
17. Does the library contain Arab and middle eastern themes such as books recognized by the Arab American National Museum?
18. Does the library contain Asian themes such as books recognized by the South Asia Book Award or the Asian Pacific Library Association?
19. Does the library contain disability and exceptionality themes such as books recognized by the Schneider Family Book Award, the Dolly Gray Children's Literature Award, or Disabilities in Kidlit?
20. Does the library contain LGBTQ themes such as books recognized by the Stonewall Book Award?
21. Does the library contain tolerance and peace themes such as books recognized by the Jane Addams Children's Book Award or the Carter G. Woodson Book Award?
22. Does the library contain Latinx/Hispanic themes such as books recognized by the Americas Award, the Pura Belpre Award, or the Tomas Rivera Book Award?

APPENDIX B: CHECKLIST FOR ASSESSING CHILDREN'S
LITERATURE

Story

- Are the stories interesting to children?
- Are there various conflicts for children to explore?
- How are the conflicts resolved?

Characters

- Do characters represent people from a variety of cultural groups?
- Do "good" characters reflect a variety of backgrounds?
- Are females as well as males depicted in leadership roles?

Themes

- Does the story offer children a variety of things to think about, to question, and to consider?
- Are values being explored instead of preached?
- Are there lessons to be learned?

Settings

- Do the stories reflect a variety of settings?
- Are urban, suburban and rural settings represented realistically?
- Are cultural settings represented realistically?

Illustrations

- Are diverse populations represented?
- Is there diversity represented within cultural groups?

- Are characters realistically and genuinely represented?
- Do the illustrations avoid reinforcing societal stereotypes?

Other Considerations

- Will the stories encourage discussions?
- Are children exposed to multiple perspectives and values?
- Do the stories promote understanding of our diverse society?
- Are the stories age appropriate to ensure children can understand what is presented?

APPENDIX C: CUSTOMIZED CHECKLIST FOR INVENTORY LIST

1. Are the stories interesting to children?
2. Are there various conflicts for children to explore?
3. How are the conflicts resolved?
4. Do characters represent people from a variety of cultural groups?
5. Do "good" characters reflect a variety of backgrounds?
6. Are females as well as males depicted in leadership roles?
7. Does the story offer children a variety of things to think about, to question, and to consider?
8. Are values being explored instead of preached?
9. Are there lessons to be learned?
10. Do the stories reflect a variety of settings?
11. Are urban, suburban and rural settings represented realistically?
12. Are cultural settings represented realistically?
13. Are diverse populations represented?
14. Is there diversity represented within cultural groups?
15. Are characters realistically and genuinely represented?
16. Do the illustrations avoid reinforcing societal stereotypes?
17. Will the stories encourage discussions?
18. Are children exposed to multiple perspectives and values?
19. Do the stories promote understanding of our diverse society?
20. Are the stories age appropriate to ensure children can understand what is presented?
21. Are there books for children at different reading levels and abilities?

22. Are there a variety of time periods/settings present in the library?
23. Does the library have a balance of genres: fiction (historical, realistic, fantasy) and nonfiction (informational and biography)?
24. Does the library give children the opportunity to see individuals who are different from themselves to encourage acceptance of diversity?
25. Do the books communicate that every culture is composed of individuals?
26. Are the text's details, language, and illustrations aligned with the cultural group that is intended to be depicted?
27. Do the books in the library avoid stereotypes/bias?
28. Does the library encourage children to read a range of books about the same cultural group that are written from different perspectives?
29. Are there books written by authors who have an inside perspective/first-hand expertise in the cultural group?
30. Do the books in the library accurately represent the beliefs, values, and lives of the cultural group that is intended to be depicted?
31. Does the library contain a variety of award-winning books such as the Newbery Award, Caldecott Award, Geisel Award, Sibert Informational Book Award, Orbis Pictus Award, Scott O'Dell Award, or the Boston Globe-Horn Book Award?
32. Does the library contain Africa and African American themes such as books recognized by the Coretta Scott King Award or Africa Access?
33. Does the library contain Latinx/Hispanic themes such as books recognized by the Americas Award, the Pura Belpré Award, or the Tomás Rivera Book Award?

APPENDIX D: K-2 SAMPLE TEXTS BY BENCHMARK



Sample texts by benchmark

	ELA.K. R.1.1	ELA.K. R.1.3	ELA.K. R.1.4	ELA.K. R.2.1	ELA.K. R.2.2	ELA.K. R.2.4	ELA.K. R.3.1	ELA.K. R.3.2	ELA.K. R.3.3
	Describe the main character(s), setting, and important events in a story.	Explain the roles of author and illustrator of a story.	Identify rhyme in a poem.	Use titles, headings, and illustrations to predict and confirm the topic of texts.	Identify the topic of and multiple details in a text.	Explain the difference between opinions and facts about a topic.	Identify and explain descriptive words in text(s).	Retell a text orally to enhance comprehension.	Compare and contrast characters' experiences in stories.
"At the Seaside" by Robert Louis Stevenson			•					•	
"The Clock" - a Mother Goose Poem by Unknown			•				•	•	
<i>A Mother for Choco</i> by Keiko Kasza	•	•						•	•
<i>Brown Bear, Brown Bear</i> by Bill Martin Jr.		•	•				•	•	
<i>Chicka Chicka Boom Boom</i> by Bill Martin, Jr. and John Archambault			•					•	
<i>Corduroy</i> by Don Freeman	•	•						•	•
<i>Curious George</i> by H.A. Rey	•	•					•	•	•
<i>Hop on Pop</i> by Dr. Seuss		•	•					•	
<i>I am Jackie Robinson</i> by Brad Meltzer				•	•	•		•	•
<i>Mission to Space</i> by John Herrington				•	•	•		•	•
<i>Now We Are Six</i> by A.A. Milne			•					•	
<i>On a Farm</i> by Alexa Andrews				•	•			•	



Sample texts by benchmark

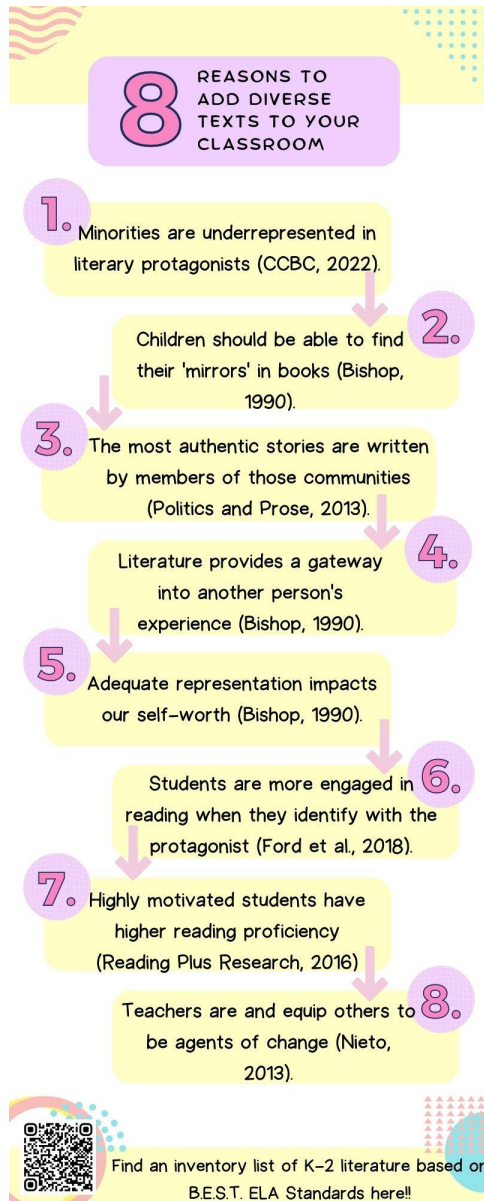
	ELA.1. R.1.1	ELA.1. R.1.2	ELA.1. R.1.3	ELA.1. R.1.4	ELA.1. R.2.1	ELA.1. R.2.2	ELA.1. R.2.3	ELA.1. R.2.4	ELA.1. R.3.1	ELA.1. R.3.2	ELA.1. R.3.3
	Identify and describe the main story elements in a story.	Identify and explain the moral of a story.	Explain who is telling the story using context clues.	Identify stanzas and line breaks in poems.	Use text features including titles, headings, captions, graphs, maps, glossaries, and/or illustrations to demonstrate understanding of texts.	Identify the topic of and relevant details in a text.	Explain similarities and differences between information provided in visuals and words in an informational text.	Identify an author's opinion(s) about the topic.	Identify and explain descriptive words and phrases in text(s).	Retell a text in oral or written form to enhance comprehension.	Compare and contrast two texts on the same topic.
"Daffodowndilly" by A.A. Milne				•				•		•	
"Elelelephony" by Laura Richards				•				•		•	
<i>A Picture Book of Benjamin Franklin</i> by David Adler					•	•	•	•		•	•
<i>Chickens Don't Fly</i> by Laura Lyn Disiena					•	•	•		•	•	•
<i>Clifford the Big Red Dog</i> by Norman Bridwell	•	•	•						•	•	
<i>Danny and the Dinosaur</i> by Syd Hoff	•	•	•						•	•	
<i>Drum Dream Girl</i> by Margarita Engle	•	•	•					•		•	
<i>Fantastic Undersea Life of Jacques Cousteau</i> by Dan Yaccarino					•	•	•		•	•	•
<i>From Seed to Pumpkin</i> by Wendy Pfeffer					•	•	•		•	•	•
<i>How People Learned to Fly</i> by Fran Hodgkins					•	•	•		•	•	•
<i>I Am Enough</i> by Grace Byers	•	•	•						•	•	
<i>I am Helen Keller</i> by Brad Meltzer					•	•	•			•	•
<i>I Wonder</i> by Tana Hoban					•	•	•			•	•
<i>Keep a Poem in Your Pocket</i> by Beatrice Schenk de Regniers				•					•	•	
<i>Madeline</i> by Ludwig Bemelmans	•								•	•	



Sample texts by benchmark

	ELA.2. R.1.1	ELA.2. R.1.2	ELA.2. R.1.3	ELA.2. R.1.4	ELA.2. R.2.1	ELA.2. R.2.2	ELA.2. R.2.3	ELA.2. R.2.4	ELA.2. R.3.1	ELA.2. R.3.2	ELA.2. R.3.3
	Identify plot structure and describe main story elements in a literary text.	Identify and explain a theme of a literary text.	Identify different characters' perspectives in a literary text.	Identify rhyme schemes in poems.	Explain how text features—including titles, headings, captions, graphs, maps, glossaries, and/or illustrations—contribute to the meaning of texts.	Identify the central idea and relevant details in a text.	Explain an author's purpose in an informational text.	Explain an author's opinion(s) and supporting evidence.	Identify and explain similes, idioms, and alliteration in text(s).	Retell a text to enhance comprehension.	Compare and contrast important details presented by two texts on the same topic or theme.
"Gathering Leaves" by Robert Frost		•		•						•	
"The Crocodile" by Lewis Carroll		•		•						•	
"The Fieldmouse" by Cecil Frances Alexander		•		•						•	
"The Swing" by Robert Louis Stevenson		•		•						•	•
<i>A More Perfect Union: The Story of Our Constitution</i> by Betsy Maestro					•	•	•	•		•	•
<i>Bears on Hemlock Mountain</i> by Alice Dalgliesh	•	•	•							•	
<i>Bee Dance</i> by Rick Chrustowski					•	•	•			•	•
<i>Eleanor</i> by Barbara Cooney					•	•	•	•		•	
<i>Father of the Constitution: A Story about James Madison</i> by Barbara Mitchell					•	•	•			•	
<i>Four Famished Foxes and Fosdyke</i> by Pamela Duncan	•	•	•						•	•	
<i>Give Bees a Chance</i> by Bethany Barton					•	•	•	•		•	•
<i>In a Pickle and other Funny Idioms</i> by Marvin Terban					•				•		
<i>Living or Nonliving?</i> by Kelli Hicks					•	•	•			•	•

APPENDIX E: SHAREABLE INFOGRAPHIC WITH QR CODE



QR code link: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1B345uQTLORGZ-Zfq1ECaO6LQR1UkDCIW/view?usp=sharing>

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