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ABSTRACT

Noting that literature written for children and adolescents can help students gain an understanding of the Pacific Rim area and its people, this paper presents advice on selecting appropriate literature, a children's literature bibliography, and an adolescent literature bibliography. The paper notes that to select appropriate literature, a teacher should consider the general accuracy of the story line, lack of stereotypes, use of appropriate language rather than derogatory slang, accurate perspective of the author, and story line and illustrations current in fact and interpretation with children's and adolescent literature. The approximately 700-item bibliography of children's literature that comprises appendix A of the paper has two perspectives: a compilation of authors from the Pacific Rim, and lists of coauthors from the Pacific Rim and other countries who have written books about the region. The approximately 225-item adolescent literature bibliography presented in appendix B lists books with themes or characters from the Pacific Rim area. (RS)

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Children's and Adolescent Literature from the Pacific Rim

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Children's and Adolescent Literature from the Pacific Rim

What is the Pacific Rim? It is made up of the nations that share the shoreline of the Pacific Ocean, and there are thirty-eight nations located in this area.

The Atlantic nations have been the focus of the world's economy, business, tourism, literary and art world for the last five centuries. But that is changing, however, for the Pacific Rim area can boast of some of the world's largest economies, six of the seven powerful armies, and over half of the world's population. This is also an area of stark contrasts, as some of the world's highest population densities are found in Hong Kong, South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Macao and Singapore as well as some of the least dense population areas of the world being in Canada, Australia, and Antarctica. An area of contrasting climates form from the rainforests of the tropical regions to the ice and snow covered Antarctica. And, since the Pacific Ocean covers one-third of the earth's surface and is 8,000 miles at the widest point it has received the nickname "Ring of Fire" as ninety-one percent of the world's active volcanoes are located in this area (Phillips and Levi, 1988).

As this emerging giant is bordering on the western shore of our country, it would seem as if the study of the Pacific Rim should be part of the curriculum in elementary and secondary schools with the major emphasis on preparing students for the twenty-first century in an interdependent global society. It is important that students understand the culture of the Pacific Rim countries.

According to Hernandez (1989), the definition of *culture* is a system of beliefs, standards, and values which is instrumental in guiding a particular group of people's behavior, feelings, and thoughts. A culture is a dynamic process which helps a person make sense of his or her life and understand the behavior of others (Spindler and Spindler, 1990).

The Pacific Rim is rich in cultural diversity. Literature written for children and adolescents is an ideal way to help students gain an understanding of the area and its people. According to Bishop (1987), students can learn through literature that all people are alike with the same emotions, needs, and desires, but at the same time can understand the differences among cultural groups. Students should also be able to understand the effects of social issues and forces that shape the lives of these people and comprehend the values that are transmitted in a culture.

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This comprehension and compassion can be developed through the use of multicultural literature. Harris (1992) states that *multicultural literature* is literary works that focus on people of color, religious and regional minorities, the disabled, and the aged. To further help a student's understanding of differences, a teacher should include *multiethnic literature*, which deals with people of diverse backgrounds within the United States, including African Americans, Native Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Asian Americans.

According to Sims (1982), teachers should use *culturally conscious* literature that accurately reflects a group's culture, language, history, values, and does not present the group as stereotypes but as complex human beings. Another consideration for teachers is to use *social conscious literature* written about minorities to help both majority and minority readers understand the conditions of fellow humans (Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson, 1993). If a teacher decides to use these literature types, then he or she should provide a foundation by presenting background information such as political and social views prominent when the work was written and what has occurred in society since that period of time to improve conditions and feelings toward the cultural group.

To select appropriate literature a teacher should consider the following: (1) the general accuracy of the story line, (2) lack of stereotypes, (3) use of appropriate language rather than derogatory slang, (4) accurate perspective of the author and, (5) story line and illustrations need to be current in fact and interpretation in children's and adolescent literature (Ramirez and Ramirez, 1994).

Basic guidelines on what multiethnic books should portray have been developed by Ramirez and Ramirez (1994). These guidelines include the following points: (1) the literary work should reflect the authentic way of life for a group of people, (2) provide accurate information about the people in the story and attempt to correct any historical errors or omissions, (3) the characters should be true to life by providing a positive image rather than prejudiced description or stereotypical view, (4) the illustrations should be a true reflection of the group, and (5) the language should provide insight into the group.

The children's literature bibliography has two perspectives; a compilation of authors from the Pacific Rim countries and authors from the Pacific Rim and other countries who have written books

about the region. Pacific Rim countries represented in children's literature written in English or translated in this bibliography are Antarctica, Australia, Cambodia, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Laos, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Russia, Singapore, United States, Vietnam, and Islands of the Pacific (Appendix A). Also included are books presenting a global perspective.

The adolescent literature bibliography presents books with themes or characters from the Pacific Rim area. Countries represented include Australia, Cambodia, Canada, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Japan, Korea, Laos, Mexico, New Zealand, China, Russia, United States, and Vietnam (Appendix B).

In both bibliographies, those countries not represented indicates that either books representing this area were not found to be suitable (outdated, stereotyped, etc.) or a book representing this area was not found at all. While some Pacific Rim countries feature a dearth of literature, many others do not. It would seem appropriate and timely for educators to discover the native literature of all the Pacific Rim countries, especially those not widely represented by children's and adolescent books.

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APPENDIX A

Pacific Rim Bibliography By Authors From or About the Area

Antarctica

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Australia

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Ecuador

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