

## **Authenticating Children's Literature: Raising Cultural Awareness with an Inquiry-Based Project in a Teacher Education Course**

**By Jane Smith & Patricia Wiese**

Any visit to the children's section of a popular bookstore or the library of a nearby elementary school will verify the fact that folktales constitute a significant portion of the literature represented. Folktales are extremely popular with children (Norton, 1999), and numerous reasons exist for their use in children's education. Folktales can help children appreciate the reality of human diversity and increase

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children's empathy with people of other cultures (Fuhler, Farris & Hatch, 1998). Through folktales, children can experience the wishes, dreams, and problems of people around the world and discover that all people share a need for love, hope, and security (Santino, 1991). Folk material can also initiate discussions of values, worldview and history (Magliocco, 1992).

Unfortunately, these multicultural benefits can be diminished by the use of picture storybooks that do not adapt or retell folktales in an accurate, authentic, and respectful manner (Kurtz, 1996; Mo & Shen, 1997; Yokota, 1993). Noll (2003) states that cultur-

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ally authentic literature has the “capacity to break down negative stereotypes and encourage understanding and appreciation of different cultures” (p. 183). Bishop (1997) writes that if “multicultural literature is to . . . help readers gain insight into and appreciation for the social groups reflected in the literature, then the literature ought to reflect accurately those groups and their cultures” (p. 16). Norton (2001) notes that the issue of authenticity is crucial in the selection of multicultural children's literature. Yet, Norton (2001) acknowledges the question posed by Betsy Hearne: “How do you tell if a folktale in picture-book format is authentic, or true to its cultural background?” (p. 8).

This article discusses the importance of authentic picture-storybook adaptations of multicultural folktales and describes an action research project through which a children's picture-book adaptation of a traditional tale can be authenticated using an inquiry-based process. In addition to modeling an actual authentication project using *The Golden Sandal: A Middle Eastern Cinderella Story*, adapted by Rebecca Hickox (1998) and illustrated by Will Hillenbrand, the authors describe their implementation of the authentication process with pre-service teachers in an undergraduate children's literature course.

### **The Need for Cultural Authenticity in Picture-Storybook Adaptations of Multicultural Folktales for Children**

Before we describe our authentication project and its role in teacher education, we believe it is important to address the value of authentic folktales in a child's education since our ultimate objective is to prepare our university students to become effective educators. Folktales originate from the oral storytelling traditions of their respective cultures. Recognized as fiction, generally timeless and placeless, they usually tell the adventures of animal or human characters and contain common narrative motifs, such as supernatural adversaries, supernatural helpers, magic and marvels, tasks and quests, and common themes (Norton, 1999). The use of folktales in the classroom, usually in the form of picture-storybook adaptations, can help children understand the world and identify with universal human struggles. Norton (1999) cites Carlson's eight respects in which children's understanding of the world is increased through traditional literature: tales help children understand nonscientific cultural traditions of early humanity, show children the interrelatedness of different types of stories and motifs, teach children about cultural diffusion, help children develop an appreciation for culture and art of different countries, provide children with factual information about different countries, familiarize children with the many different languages and dialects of cultures around the world, provide children with stimulation for creative drama, writing, and other forms of artistic expression, and encourage children to realize people all over the world have inherent goodness, mercy, courage, and industry (pp. 282-284).

Examples abound concerning lessons from folklore that help explain other

cultures. In *Asian Tales and Tellers*, Spagnoli (1998) discusses the clash that comes between the typical Western view stressing civil liberty, freedom of speech, and democracy and the Asian tendency to place a high priority on family first and to devise a more communal and equitable form of development. In *Arab Folktales from Palestine and Israel*, Patai (1998) lists as one of his primary purposes in writing the book the intent “to present the Arab folktale as an invaluable source of knowledge of the mental world of traditional Arab culture” (p.7). In a statement that can be applied to the study of the folktale in many cultures, Patai (1998) adds, “that the events related in [the folktale], the actions of its protagonists, and their presuppositions contain significant pointers to the sociocultural patterns of the society in which the tale is at home” (p.11).

In order for children to benefit from folktales in the ways described above, it is necessary that the picture-storybook adaptations of these multicultural tales authentically represent the cultures to which they are attached. Harada (1995) points out that the consequences of inaccurate portrayals through stereotypes are especially significant for young children since children reportedly develop an awareness of cultural and physical characteristics of people at an early age. Noll (2003) supports this position, exhorting authors and illustrators to portray a culture accurately and authentically since “children’s identities, attitudes, and understandings are negatively influenced” when “literature . . . contains misinformation and warped images” (p. 182).

But the responsibility to produce culturally authentic works can be compromised by the desire to produce children’s books that satisfy the demands of the marketplace. Jane Kurtz (1996) discusses the conflict that she, as a new author of multicultural children’s books, faces when working with the demands of cultural accuracy and the demands of the story. She has altered traditional details of folktales or accepted minor inaccuracies in art “because I recognize that many elements of a book need to be balanced” (p.40). However, Kurtz notes that accuracy of illustrations is a serious matter as children do develop perceptions of a country or culture by the pictures or illustrations they see. Ironically, even culturally accurate attempts at authenticity can be editorially compromised. For example, children’s illustrator Susan Guevara (2003) writes that she has been “asked many times to ‘tone down’ the depiction of non-Anglo cultures: tone down facial features, tone down color, remove iconography that might suggest a religious heritage or belief” or, in other words, to “Anglicize the work, presumably for fear of creating stereotypes” (p.50).

Though research supports the position that multicultural literature should be culturally authentic, an authoritative definition of cultural authenticity has yet to be established. In *Stories Matter: The Complexity of Cultural Authenticity in Children’s Literature*, Fox and Short (2003) acknowledge readers’ expectations that the editors “offer one specific definition of cultural authenticity” (p. 5), but they decline to do so. Instead, the editors allow each contributor to define cultural authenticity on his/her own terms.

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Bishop (2003) defines cultural authenticity as “the extent to which a book reflects the worldview of a specific cultural group and the authenticating details of language and everyday life for members of that cultural group” (as cited in Fox & Short, 2003, p. 5). Guevara (2003) states that “an authentic work is a work that feels alive—something true from the culture exists there” (as cited in Fox & Short, 2003, p. 9). In stressing the importance of accuracy, Rochman (2003) notes that “authenticity matters, but there’s no formula for how you acquire it” (as cited in Fox & Short, 2003, p. 10).

Yokota (1993) maintains that *cultural accuracy* is the first criterion for selecting multicultural literature, meaning that “issues are represented in ways that reflect the values and beliefs of the culture” (p.159). But Mo and Shen (1997) contend that cultural authenticity is more than accuracy or avoidance of stereotypes; it also involves the “cultural values, facts, and attitudes that members of a culture as a whole consider worthy of acceptance and belief” (p. 87). They conclude that when “your version of the culture can be accommodated inside the range of values acceptable within that social group you have achieved a measure of authenticity” (p.87).

Determining the cultural authenticity of a work can extend to an examination of the cultural background of the author and the illustrator. Some scholars assert that authors and illustrators of multicultural literature must be members of the cultural, ethnic or racial group depicted in the story in order for the work to be truly authentic (Jones & Moomaw, 2002; Seto, 2003; Slapin & Seale, 1998). Others maintain that lack of cultural membership can be overcome through extensive research and the use of reliable sources (Guevera, 2003; Lasky, 2003; Mo & Shen, 1997; Moreillon, 2003; Noll, 2003).

Finally, any evaluation of multicultural literature must include criteria for quality literature, as well as for content (Bainbridge et al., 1999; Council on Interracial Books for Children, 1980; Harada, 1995; Yokota, 1993). Dana and Lynch-Brown (1992-93) state that “a good story detailing distinctive cultural features will undoubtedly promote a culture’s uniqueness as well as its universality” (p. 50).

Certainly, a balance has to be found between the aesthetic and the cultural choices made by an author or illustrator of a children’s picture book. As Betsy Hearne (1993b) proposes, a text adapted from folklore for children should “be judged for its balance of two traditions: the one from which it is drawn and the one that it is entering” (p.33). For the purposes of our project involving the authentication of a picture-storybook adaptation of traditional literature from a specific cultural group, we define authenticity as the extent to which the reteller, adaptor, or illustrator (1) remains reasonably true to the original printed source, (2) accurately and respectfully represents the values and beliefs of the cultural group, and (3) responsibly depicts geographical, historical, and cultural details. Although we realize that our definition calls for conclusions based on judgment as well as fact, we believe that this responsible and informed subjectivity strengthens the project since we, as well as our pre-service teachers and their future students, can benefit

from the higher-order thinking that such judgments require. We also hope that in addition to a thorough analysis of the selected literature, this definition takes into account necessary and/or understandable tailoring of the picture storybook to attract and inform an audience of children.

## **Rationale for Inquiry-Based Authentication Projects Using Multicultural Folktales**

The question of cultural authenticity in picture-book adaptations of multicultural folktales is not a simple one. Thus, one might question the wisdom of placing the responsibility for evaluating authenticity in the hands of pre-service teachers and encouraging them to develop similar programs in their future classrooms. However, we believe that this process, if facilitated effectively, can be a powerful tool for fostering multicultural understanding, nurturing intellectual curiosity and teaching critical thinking and research skills in students of all ages.

The rationale for developing student-driven authentication projects is founded on an inquiry-based pedagogy in which learners are moved from their current level of understanding to a new and deeper level through such inquiry-driven activities as questioning, researching, collecting data, reporting findings and applying concepts (IBO, 2002). Barton and Smith (2000) contend that, although curriculum should be based on the consideration of learners' needs and interests, students rarely have the opportunity to direct their own studies by making meaningful choices that connect to their prior knowledge and interests.

Inquiry in student learning also has implications from the standpoint of multicultural understanding. Culturally diverse children's literature, such as multicultural folktales, can be used as a vehicle for creating lessons that allow students to use the learning strategies of inquiry, reflection, and discussion to form deepened understanding (Leftwich, 2002). Hoffman asserts that "the best teaching about cultural difference comes from in-depth study in which students are given a wide range of materials and information about a culture and [are] allowed to come to their own conclusions" (as cited in Leftwich, 2002, p.2).

The question arises as to whether a reader's aesthetic enjoyment and connection with a picture storybook adaptation of a folktale will be hindered by attaching information-gathering responsibilities, even if these efforts are driven by the student's interest and a process of inquiry. Fang, Fu and Lamme (2003) cite Walmsley, stating that "meaningful experiences with literature should...teach students strategies for reflectively and critically interpreting the texts they read" (p. 295-296). Galda and Liang (2003) discuss the frequent use of fiction in language arts and social studies classrooms. They cite Rosenblatt's transactional theory's contention that readers construct meaning by connecting their own knowledge and experiences to the text. But they urge educators to exercise caution when using children's literature in the curriculum, as the blending of the aesthetic and efferent

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approaches to text requires careful consideration. We believe that the process of using student-generated questions to explore, through both fiction and non-fiction sources, the authenticity of the adaptation of a multicultural folktale in picture book format provides students with an enhanced understanding of the culture represented in the picture book and an invested connection between the culture being studied and the students' own views of the world outside their classrooms. We agree with Camp (2000) who quotes Vacca & Vacca's opinion that the effective combining of fact and fiction books has "the potential to be a magnifying glass that enlarges and enhances the reader's personal interaction with a subject" (p. 1).

### **Rationale for a Storytelling Component in the Authentication Project**

The art of storytelling can be traced to ancient times and has long been used in the education of children (Pellowski, 1990). In addition to the literary heritage displayed through storytelling, well established educational benefits exist. Mason (1996) notes an increase in students' attention spans, comprehension and retention of information, an improvement in students' social and communication skills, and a proprietary interest in their own learning processes. Storytelling can also change the literature event for the adult teacher (Zeece, 1997). By sharing literature-based stories, teachers not only demonstrate to children how they can become storytellers themselves, but also help them to recognize that stories come from books. Literature sharing becomes a personal two-way adventure as the benefits of books and the joys of reading and writing are reinforced through storytelling (Zeece, 1997).

Since the multicultural folktales addressed in our project were adaptations or retellings of traditional tales told orally for centuries before they were recorded in written form, we thought it only appropriate to incorporate a storytelling activity as the culminating component of our authentication project. By telling our story and then requiring our students to tell their authenticated stories, we hoped to set the groundwork for many fruitful storytelling adventures in their future classrooms.

### **Modeling an Inquiry-Based Authentication Project**

We designed our inquiry-based authentication project for pre-service teachers in undergraduate children's literature classes with Hearne's (1993b) instructions to librarians in mind: "compare adaptations to their printed sources...and consider what context graphic art provides for a story" (p. 37). Therefore, we decided that our students should examine the appropriateness of the adapted text as well as the cultural accuracy of the storybook illustrations.

To ensure that the students understood each component of the assignment, we spent several class periods modeling the steps involved in completing the project: (1) using the author's source notes, we located the earliest known written version

of our selected folktale in English and, using the literary-elements approach advocated by Norton (2001), compared it to the current picture storybook adaptation to evaluate its cultural accuracy; (2) using resources that portrayed the culture represented, we validated the cultural accuracy of the illustrations in our selected folktale, and (3) we retold our folktale to the class as a whole. The following sections describe the project: how we selected the book, how we authenticated the book, and how we modeled the process for the students.

### **Selecting the Book for Authentication**

We selected the picture book, *The Golden Sandal: A Middle Eastern Cinderella Story*, an Iraqi folktale adapted by Rebecca Hickox (1998) and illustrated by Will Hillenbrand, as our model for the authentication process. This Iraqi version of the oft-told tale has common elements with the well-known European-based versions but also contains many culturally specific elements: a red fish replaces the fairy godmother, a henna party becomes the fancy dress ball, and the mother of the prospective groom searches for “Cinderella,” a poor fisherman’s daughter by the name of Maha. The soft, subdued illustrations and the clear, descriptive text combine to create an appealing children’s book.

The book proved appealing to others as well. Marston (1999) noted that “the telling is smooth and cheerful . . . and the illustrations . . . will both charm and amuse” (p. 81). Bloom (1998) gave it a superior rating and wrote that the “illustrations . . . re-create the limpid Middle Eastern landscape” (p. 364). The National Council for the Social Studies included *The Golden Sandal* in its 1999 “best books” list and recommended its use in such curricular units as culture and people, places and environments.

The positive reviews and the depictions of the Iraqi culture were factors in our selection of the book. But it was the comprehensive source notes that sealed our selection of *The Golden Sandal*. Though the story is not placed within its cultural context and the specific changes made are not identified (Hearne, 1993a), the notes do provide the reader with the source materials used by both author and illustrator in developing their version of the folktale. Comparing the source materials to the adaptation is an essential part of the authentication process; detailed source notes provide for a smooth beginning to that process.

### **Authentication of the Text**

In her author’s notes, Rebecca Hickox (1998) reports that her Middle Eastern Cinderella story is a retelling of “The Little Red Fish and the Clog of Gold” that she found in *Arab Folktales*, translated and edited by Inea Bushnaq (1986). Therefore, we obtained Bushnaq’s (1986) text. After satisfying ourselves that we could not locate, through Bushnaq’s (1986) citations, an earlier English-language retelling or recording of the story, we determined that the 1986 version could be considered the original English version of the text for the purposes of our project. We compared

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the two texts using a two-step approach, beginning with a general comparison of the events in both versions of the tale and ending with a more specific comparison using the literary elements of plot, theme, setting, characterization, point of view and style/motifs.

Although more specific conclusions describing the comparison are displayed in the Literary Elements table, the overall findings indicated that Hickox's (1998) picture storybook adaptation followed the original Bushnaq (1986) version in most areas. In particular, certain culturally specific events were depicted carefully and closely to the original version, such as the bride's henna celebration, the role of the parent in arranging marriages, the festivities surrounding the wedding procession, and the manner in which the marriage contract was finalized. Understandable and, we believe, justifiable changes were made to render the story more appropriate for the picture book's young audience; for example, the characters were given names; the term *sandal* was substituted for the less familiar *clog*; the explicit and graphic descriptions of the stepmother's request for potions that would smell like carrion and "shred the bowels to tatters" (not to mention the repulsive effects of such potions on the unworthy stepsister) were removed or softened.

Other changes were harder to explain, such as the reteller's depiction of Maha with dark hair, when the earlier version discussed how fair she was with hair like gold, and the complicity of the stepsister in the picture storybook (reminiscent of the well-known European versions) when the earlier version attributed only clumsiness and physical ugliness to the stepsister and seemed to punish her because of her mother's actions. The picture-storybook adaptation appeared to give less attention to the role of fate and Allah and to the virtue of obedience, a value often found in Middle Eastern traditional literature (Groce & Wiese, 2000; Norton, 2001; Patai, 1998). In light of the typical fairytale motifs, it was also unclear why Hickox (1998) elected to do away with the royal family and substitute the merchant's son and wife for the prince and queen.

Although noting the somewhat questionable variations from the original text, after considering Hickox's text in its entirety and taking into account the audience to which it is directed, we ultimately concluded that the picture storybook adaptation of the text met our established criteria as being reasonably true to the original printed source and treating the depicted cultural group in a respectful and responsible manner.



### Comparison of Literary Elements

Literary Elements	Original Version	Picture Storybook
Plot	<p>A fisherman's wife drowns leaving him with a small daughter. A widow with a daughter of her own cares for his daughter and eventually marries fisherman; stepmother mistreats fisherman's daughter. The daughter saves the life of a talking fish, noting that in God's sight the good deed will not be lost, and gains, in return, a "mother" to comfort and help her. The daughter grows up and wishes to attend a henna celebration honoring the marriage of a wealthy merchant's daughter. The fisherman's daughter seeks help from the fish who provides her with an outfit to wear to the celebration and warns her to leave the party before her stepmother. Returning home, the girl trips and loses her golden clog. The king's son finds the clog and desires to marry its owner. He urges his mother to find her and she searches the village until she reaches the fisherman's hovel. The stepmother locks the fisherman's daughter in the bake house to hide her from the queen while the stepsister tries on the clog. A rooster reports the location of the clog's rightful owner; she is freed, and the clog fits. The queen gives the stepmother a purse of gold to prepare for the wedding procession. The stepmother is filled with rage and pays a perfumer for a foul-smelling oil to cause the bride's hair to fall out, a purge to "shred the bowels," and an ointment "like carrion" (p.187). The stepmother applies the potions, but they have no ill effects on the girl: she is beautiful with hair like gold and gold pieces fall from her gown. The merchant's son learns of the beauty of the prince's bride and asks to marry the stepsister, but when her mother applies the same potions to her daughter, the potions' ill effects repulse the groom, and she is cast off in disgrace. Meanwhile the prince and fisherman's daughter live in great happiness and are blessed with seven children.</p>	<p>Similar plot: some changes include the fisherman's daughter's stated name, Maha; the reference to "Allah" instead of God (although Allah is used later in the Bushnaq version) and the admonition to retrieve the fish or "be sorry" instead of the threatened curse, the reference to the golden shoe as a sandal instead of a clog; the proposed groom is the merchant's son instead of the prince; the wedding is set for "Friday;" the purge and its results are deleted from the story.</p>
Characterization-	<p>A week after marrying the fisherman, the widow changes and forces the fisherman's daughter to do all the work, refuses to give her soap, and feeds her nothing but crusts and crumbs. The girl is patient, trying not to grieve her father, and accepts responsibility for her situation: "I picked up the scorpion with my own hand; I'll save myself" (p.182). The fish recognizes the girl's patience and kindness and places itself in the role of mother. The stepmother is portrayed as being jealous, angry, and cruel, but the stepdaughter is not attributed with any characteristics other than her unpleasant appearance and clumsiness. The fisherman's daughter shares her sorrow</p>	<p>The stepmother's mistreatment begins more gradually; she feeds her a few dried dates when the fisherman is gone. Maha is a sympathetic character, with "beauty inside and out" (p.9) but is not portrayed as contemplating her situation in the patient, introspective manner of the earlier version (the</p>

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	<p>with the fish. The fisherman's daughter does not forget to leave the henna party in time, but when she loses her clog [because of "fate and divine decree" (p.184)], she is afraid to take the time to look for it in the river, lest she return later than her stepmother and stepsister. The prince finds the slipper in the royal pool and orders his groom to retrieve it. The stepmother is enraged by her stepdaughter's good fortune, and, after purchasing the evil potions from the perfumer, "held the girl by her ear and poured the purge down her throat" (p.187). Overall, the fisherman's daughter is aware of her stepmother's nature but patient and trusting in Allah (and with the fish's help) to right her situation; the stepmother is violent and cruel, and the stepmother's daughter is a flat character with no honorable or dishonorable actions, although she bears the brunt of her mother's actions.</p>	<p>fish calls her luckless rather than patient). When Maha wants to go to the henna party, she complains to the fish that she is treated like a slave. The stepsister is depicted as "selfish and mean" and adding to Maha's woes (p.9). Maha forgets to leave the henna party early and loses her sandal in her rush to get home. The merchant's son, Tariq, finds the sandal at the river's edge and urges his mother to find its owner for his bride. Although similar in many ways, the picture storybook version depicts Maha less contemplative, the stepmother less violent, and the stepdaughter more complicit in Maha's mistreatment and deserving of her ultimate fate. The fish is not so clearly cast in a mother's role.</p>
Setting	<p>"Neither here nor there" (p. 181), with the girl's mother drowning in "the great river;" the setting notes the home of the fisherman, the hall with cushions where the henna celebration was held, the bridge over the river, the palace with its gates, and the various houses of nobles and merchants and goldsmiths (entering one gate and leaving at the next), as well as craftsmen, tradesmen, water carriers, weavers, and finally fisherman near the river. The perfumer was located at a bazaar, and the wedding procession included the bride's litter accompanied by horses, drums, fluttering bright clothes, singing, chanting, clapping, and jollity.</p>	<p>Similar, although less specific and with no mention of the royal residence or bazaar and with less detail concerning the different types of residences.</p>
Conflicts	<p>Person versus person between the fisherman's daughter and her stepmother; apparent person versus self in terms of the stepmother's internal, seething anger and jealousy of her stepdaughter and the fisherman's daughter's apparent internal sorrow but patience concerning her plight.</p>	<p>Similar, with the added person versus person conflict between Maha and her stepsister.</p>
Themes	<p>Good deeds and patience will be rewarded. Fate and Allah control outcomes. Justice prevails in the end, and goodness over-</p>	<p>Good deeds will be rewarded; justice prevails in the end, and goodness overcomes evil.</p>

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	comes evil. Proofs: Throughout the story, the fish remarks on the fisherman's daughter's patience to endure her plight; the queen chastises her son to be patient as she painstakingly searches for his bride; several statements are made about the role of Fate and Allah in all aspects of life; in the end the fisherman's daughter is rewarded and the potions are harmless to her, punishing instead the stepmother (through her daughter).	Proofs: Maha's good deeds and kindness are rewarded and the stepmother and stepsister are punished.
Style	The style of the story telling is poetic throughout, with rhymes and philosophical sayings directed at a wide audience. In places, the language is graphic and explicit. The story has a more formal beginning and ending.	The story is told in the style of a traditional fairy tale directed at children. With the exception of the rooster's rhyming proclamation, the story is told in descriptive, yet pleasing and gentle prose.

### Illustrations

In the source notes for *The Golden Sandal*, illustrator Will Hillenbrand cites *The World of Islam: Faith, People, Culture*, edited by Bernard Lewis (1976), as the source for most of his material. We were fortunate to find a copy of Mr. Lewis' work in our library's collection. In the foreword, Mr. Lewis notes that several chapters of his book are concerned with the "period of Islamic greatness...from the advent of Islam in the 7<sup>th</sup> century to the aftermath of the Mongol conquests in the 13<sup>th</sup>" (p. 9). Knowing that Hickox based her adaptation on an Iraqi tale, we decided to verify the authenticity of Mr. Hillenbrand's illustrations as true to the culture of Iraq and/or the greater Islamic world during the Middle Ages.

However, we did not confine our authentication to a comparison of the illustrations in *The Golden Sandal* to material found in *The World of Islam*, for we were aware that many of the books chosen by our students to authenticate would not include information from the illustrator regarding source material. So, in order to model the process fully, we also located additional resources that depicted or discussed Iraqi and/or Islamic culture during the Middle Ages.

We began the authentication process by viewing each of Hillenbrand's illustrations in order to discern any aspects that reflected verifiable characteristics of the culture, including the garments worn by the different characters, their jewelry and adornments, the architecture and design of the buildings, the food and the utensils and crockery used in its preparation and consumption, the activities in which the characters engaged, the plants and animals depicted and the uses thereof, and the visual interplay between the characters. Then we organized the notes by listing each detail under a broad subject heading.

We used the subject headings as keywords to search our library's online catalog

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for additional resources that could be used to authenticate the characteristics. We then made a list of all the books that might prove useful and set out to locate them. We quickly scanned each text to determine its value, discarding the unsuitable ones. We examined each of the selected resources more thoroughly, noting any information about any of the details listed when viewing the illustrations in the book. We also made copies of any drawings or photographs that depicted items found in the story. We organized these notes using the same broad subject headings as those used with the illustrations, compared the two sets of notes and recorded our findings.

While Hillenbrand's illustrations do depict several characteristics of the Iraqi/ Islamic culture accurately, our research showed that there are some aspects of his illustrations that are not authentic. In the sources that we consulted, Islamic men did not dress in sleeveless vests worn over loose fitting shirts tucked into loose fitting trousers; meals were served on large trays, not on tables; diners ate while seated on the floor, not on stools; Islamic people slept on mattresses spread out on the floor, not on a mattress resting on an iron bed frame, and the bread oven was made of clay, not stone.

We attributed some inaccuracies—such as the portrayal of multicolored homes in the wealthy section of the village when our sources stated that Islamic homes had plain, unadorned exteriors—to the illustrator's desire to create a visually attractive picture book for children. Other inaccuracies, such as those described above, cannot be so easily dismissed and seem designed simply to make the book more acceptable to a Western audience, not more acceptable to children. Whether these inaccuracies were requested by the publisher is not known, but we believe that the children who comprise this audience, the culture from which the story is taken, and the book itself would have been much better served had the illustrations accurately depicted these cultural details. We concluded, therefore, that the illustrations did not fully meet our established criteria for cultural authenticity.

The table below summarizes our major findings.

#### Results of Illustration Research

Detail	Picture Storybook	Resources
Clothing		
Male	<p>Maha's father / Maha's groom Loose-fitting shirt tucked into loose-fitting pants, sleeveless vests</p> <p>Male perfumer Ankle-length jumper dress over long-sleeved shirt</p>	<p>Knee-length tunics with long, tight sleeves over formfitting trousers (Lewis, shown on pp. 48, 112, 1976)</p> <p>Long tunic with loose-fitting trousers (Lewis, shown on p. 318, 1976)</p> <p>Hip-length tunic with formfitting trousers (Lewis, shown on p. 221, 1976)</p> <p>Clothing used to identify place in social order (Stillman, 2000), so unlikely poor fisherman and merchant's son dressed alike</p> <p>Fishermen wore short, close-fitting tunic or belted coat, either sleeveless or with</p>

Female

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Female	<p>Jumper dress over shirt, dresses with empire waists and wide sleeves, dresses sashed at waist</p> <p>Veils that cover the head, but not the face</p> <p>Bride decorated hands and feet with henna</p> <p>Sandals, knee high boots, bare feet</p>	<p>elbow-length tight sleeves (Stillman, 2000)</p> <p>Islamic women in Middle Ages wore dresses with belts, sashes and wide sleeves (Guthrie, 2001), (Stillman, 2000)</p> <p>Veils that cover the head, but not the face (Lewis, shown on p. 116, 1976)</p> <p>Women's faces veiled in public from the nose down (Stillman, 2000) Upper-class women wore veils, peasant women did not (Harris, 1958)</p> <p>Women decorated hands and feet with henna (Guthrie, 2001, p. 154)</p> <p>Islamic people wore a wide variety of footwear, including low slippers, pointed, ankle-length leather shoes, boots that reached mid-calf, and sandals (Stillman, p. 73, 2000)</p> <p>Men and women shown with bare feet and wearing slippers (Lewis, 1976)</p>
Architecture	<p>Buildings have smooth walls as if made of mud or clay</p> <p>Homes of the poor villagers are nondescript, colorless, rectangular; homes of the wealthy villagers are multicolored and of varying shapes and sizes</p> <p>Open doorways partitioned with curtains</p> <p>Bread oven made of stone, has pitched roof, iron door with bars, and a chimney</p>	<p>Buildings made primarily of mud brick, either sun-dried or baked, or mud and straw (Ettinghausen, 1976; Jairazbhoy, 2000; Warren, 1982)</p> <p>Homes have unadorned exteriors (Ettinghausen, 1976; Jairazbhoy, 2000; Warren, 1982) Color rarely applied to outside brick (Warren, 1982)</p> <p>Curtains used as partitions between rooms (Grabar, 1976)</p> <p>Picture of bread oven shows it made of clay, looks more like a large cistern (Warren, p. 107, 1982)</p>
Furniture	<p>Dining table in fisherman's hut; two stools drawn up to table, spoon on table</p> <p>Maha's stepsister shown holding on to iron bedstead that is on wheels</p> <p>Three candles in candleholders on Maha's dining table</p>	<p>Muslims ate while seated on floor (Ettinghausen, 1976)</p> <p>Meals were served on large trays, not tables (Grabar, 1976; Warren, 1982)</p> <p>Ate with fingers or a spoon (Guthrie, 2001, p. 83)</p> <p>Islamic people slept on mattresses that were spread out on the floor at night (Ettinghausen, 1976; Warren, 1982; Werr 1996) and stored in chests or stacked in corner of room</p>

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		during day (Ettinghausen, 1976; Werr 1996) Candles expensive, unlikely to be in poor fisherman's hut (Guthrie, 2001, p. 27)
Instruments	Musicians at wedding ceremony playing drums and horns	Music played at weddings (Shiloah, 1976, p. 178)
Animals	Horse of merchant's son has saddle, stirrups and bridle with reins	No saddles or stirrups used; reins connected through ring in nose (Leick, 2003)

### **Storytelling**

The storytelling portion of our authentication project combined portions of both the original and picture-storybook versions of *The Golden Sandal*. For example, the original version contained entertaining rhymes and a formal ending that we incorporated into our storytelling, but we chose to use the names and characters from the picture-storybook in our retelling. As we told the story and used costuming and props, we attempted to demonstrate to our students how storytelling can be used in the classroom to engage and entertain, even when lines are forgotten or mistakes made.

### **From Modeling to Implementation**

After modeling the process, we challenged our undergraduate students to work in three or four-person teams to select, authenticate, and tell their own multicultural folktales. Our students did not disappoint us! Several reported going to the university library immediately after class to begin the search for their folktales. When reporting on their progress a week later, their choices of folktales varied considerably. One group indicated that the decision to choose Paul O. Zelinsky's (1997) *Rapunzel* didn't come easily: "We became overwhelmed by the selection of books . . . then the feeling of being overwhelmed turned into confusion when all of my group members had different ideas . . . after much debate, we chose *Rapunzel* because of the wonderful author and illustrator notes." Another group chose Climo's (1999) *The Persian Cinderella* because they loved "Cinderella" stories and wanted to learn about the Persian culture. Yet another group's choice was Aardema's (1992) adaptation of the African folktale, *Anansi Finds a Fool: An Ashanti Tale* because they had never heard of the Anansi tales and found the book's illustrations to be very realistic.

Several of our Mexican-American students decided to authenticate a story from their own culture, "La Llorona," and indicated that they felt their familiarity with the story offset the fact that the available source notes in the versions they found in the library were not as thorough as other adapted folktales. They finally decided on Joe Haye's (1987) adaptation for authentication because the text

“gave sufficient information” and Vicki Trego Hill’s illustrations were “detailed enough to authenticate.”

One of the student groups clearly selected a tale because of intrigue with the story. In choosing Lawrence Yep’s (1993) retold version of an 18<sup>th</sup> century Chinese folktale, *The Shell Woman and The King*, the group members mused about its resemblance to “Rumpelstiltskin” because “of how the husband brags about the tasks that his wife can perform, and then she must perform the tasks that he brags about her doing.” They further noted “the fact that Yep had reported his changing of the setting to the kingdom of the Southern Han (917-971 A.D.)” was also valuable in pinpointing the period for authentication of the illustrations. Interest in storyline also influenced the group that chose Robert D. San Souci’s (1994) adaptation of *Sootface: An Ojibwa Cinderella* because of their interest, not only in finding and comparing it with the original written text, but also in comparing it with Martin’s (1992) *Rough-Faced Girl*, another well-known picture-storybook adaptation of the same story.

Others chose their stories because of the fun they thought they would have in telling them. For example, one group chose Eric Kimmel’s (1993) adaptation of the French folktale *Three Sacks of Truth: A Story from France* because they could not “wait to act out this story; it will be hysterical to watch three girls play the role of three young men with peaches . . . trying to pursue a princess.” Another group looked forward to acting out the Jewish Cinderella story, *The Way Meat Loves Salt*, adapted by Nina Jaffe (1998) and illustrated by Louise August, because—in addition to excellent source notes and detailed cultural illustrations—it would be so much fun to tell.

As the students moved from choosing their stories to the actual authentication process, their feedback was interesting, enthusiastic, and often amusing. Although some were clearly apprehensive at the beginning of the process, most soon became fully engaged. One student told us of her embarrassment when she found the earliest original version of her folktale in the library and “squealed out loud.” Another reported that, unlike research projects where the steps and components are dictated at the beginning, this assignment allowed him the freedom to “think up his own questions” and find the answers.

The storytelling was “touch and go” at the beginning, with some very evident cases of stage fright. However, after the first or second group performed, the students relaxed and seemed to have great fun with their stories. But most importantly, our students saw the value in the process, and many expressed their intentions to use similar authentication projects in their future classrooms. In reflections written at the conclusion of the project, students commented that

“authenticating the story helped me to understand how important it is for the story to be credible and authentic;”

“it caused me to look at a book differently;”

“I realized that if a book is not a valid representation of a particular culture, then children will get an incorrect perception of that culture.”

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Remarks about the research involved included

“usually, you . . . write a paper and use books for quotes and information. . . For the authentication project, I started with a book and researched from there. The process is almost reversed;”

“it is different from other projects because we were the experts . . . the actual researchers;”  
“this was different . . . because you researched the culture and then applied what you found out. You were teaching yourself in a way;”

“I actually went to the library and spent many hours researching . . . the feeling of finding the original text was amazing;” and

“I really had to dig for this one.”

We are continuing our authentication projects with our undergraduate classes and hope that these efforts will translate into future projects in elementary and secondary classrooms as our pre-service teachers graduate and join the ranks of practicing educators. We plan to research the teachers' use of the authentication project with their students in elementary school classrooms, as well as its influence in the selection of children's literature used in the classroom. In addition to our own efforts, we also hope this article will provide both the necessary information and inspiration to spawn further projects among its readers.

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