

Evaluating Children's Literature

Emotional Impact:

- Does this book connect you to your own humanity and that of others?
- Did this piece of literature make an impact on you?
- Is there some kind of emotion or magic in the book?
- Do you care about the characters and what happens to them?
- Does the story make you laugh or make you feel happy or sad?
- Does the story linger with you, making you want to rethink or re-experience parts of it?

Imaginative Impact:

- Does this book spark imagination, show possibilities, stretch thinking, pique curiosity, or make you think in different ways?
- What is original about this book?
- Does this story make you think about the characters in other situations?
- Do you think about what will happen to the characters next, when the story is over?
- Does the story spark your imagination, sending your mind off in many directions?
- Do you imagine what it would be like if you were in the main character's situation?

Author's Vision or World view:

- How does the author view the world and the people in it?
- How are people shown?
- Are they good or evil?
- Are they inherently competitive or cooperative?
- Are some people viewed as less worthy because they are not beautiful or rich, or are all characters portrayed as equals?
- Who has the power and how is the power distributed among the characters?
- Whose knowledge is considered best?
- Do you share the author's view of the world as it is presented through the characters?

Authenticity, Topic Information, & Author's Involvement:

- Did the author explain the kind of research he or she has done?
- Does the author cite resources or provide background information?
- Does the author explain what inspired him or her to write about the subject?

Style-Qualities of Writing:

- How has this book been written to engage the reader?
- Does the author's voice come through loud and strong?
- Does the writing make an impact through careful choice of word, description, dialogue, and figurative language?
- Is the language fresh or used in unusual and satisfying ways?
- Does the figurative language provide clear ways to view the topic?

Illustrations:

- Does the art delight and involve you?
- Does the artist pick moments that are highly visual?
- Does the artwork enhance the author's words?
- Is there variety in the work in terms of perspective and composition?
- Do the illustrations give you the feel of the culture? Are stereotypes avoided?
- Do any pictures appear to ridicule or make fun of the culture?
- Look for tokenism. If there are racial minority characters in the illustrations, do they look just like whites except for being tinted or colored in?
- Do the pictures depict minorities in subservient/passive roles or in leadership and action roles?
- Are males the "does" and the females the inactive observers?
- Did the illustrator explain the kind of research he or she has done?

Sociopolitical Considerations:

- Which groups are represented in the books? Which are left out?
- What information does the author assume the reader knows?
- What attitudes are shown toward people, animals, and even the land?
- What is shown as being important or good?
- Is the vocabulary demeaning?
- Is a range of characters represented? What kinds of roles do they have?
- Is a range of socioeconomic levels represented? How is each group represented?
- Who is shown to have power? What is the power based on?
- Are characters multidimensional in regards to race, class, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, physical abilities, emotional abilities, mental abilities, and intellectual abilities?
- Do the descriptions of characters, cultural artifacts, or cultural and social practices ring true in terms of physical appearance, behaviors, attitudes, values, language, way of life and culture?