

(Un)Covering Bias and Pushing Boundaries in Children's Literature

Arizona First Things First Early Childhood Summit 2015
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Some materials also used at National NAME Conference 2014
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Why you are here...

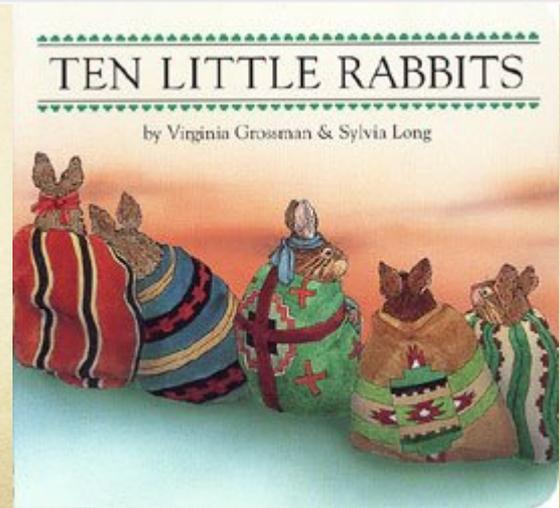
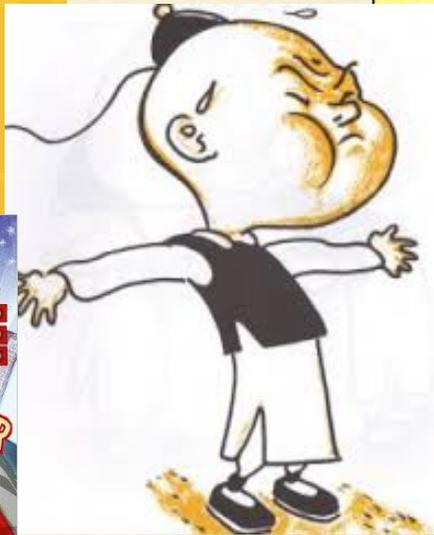
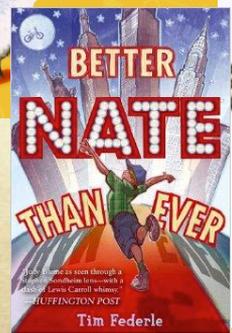
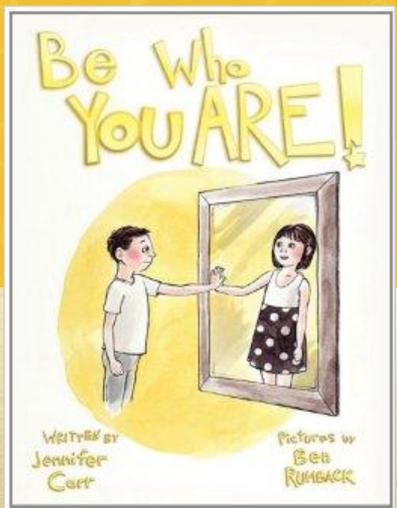
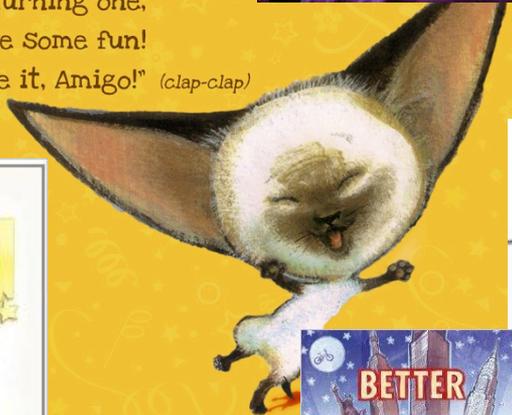
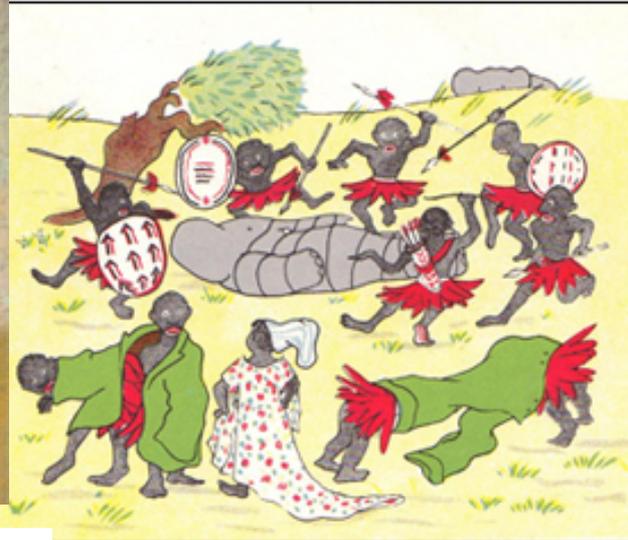
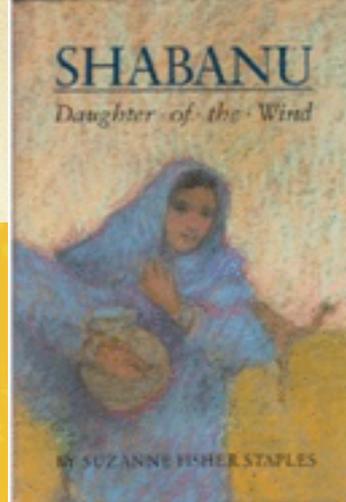
“Yip, Yippee, Yippito! (clap-clap)

It's birthday time for Eastonito! (clap-clap)

He is turning one,

So come have some fun!

We hope you can make it, Amigo!” (clap-clap)

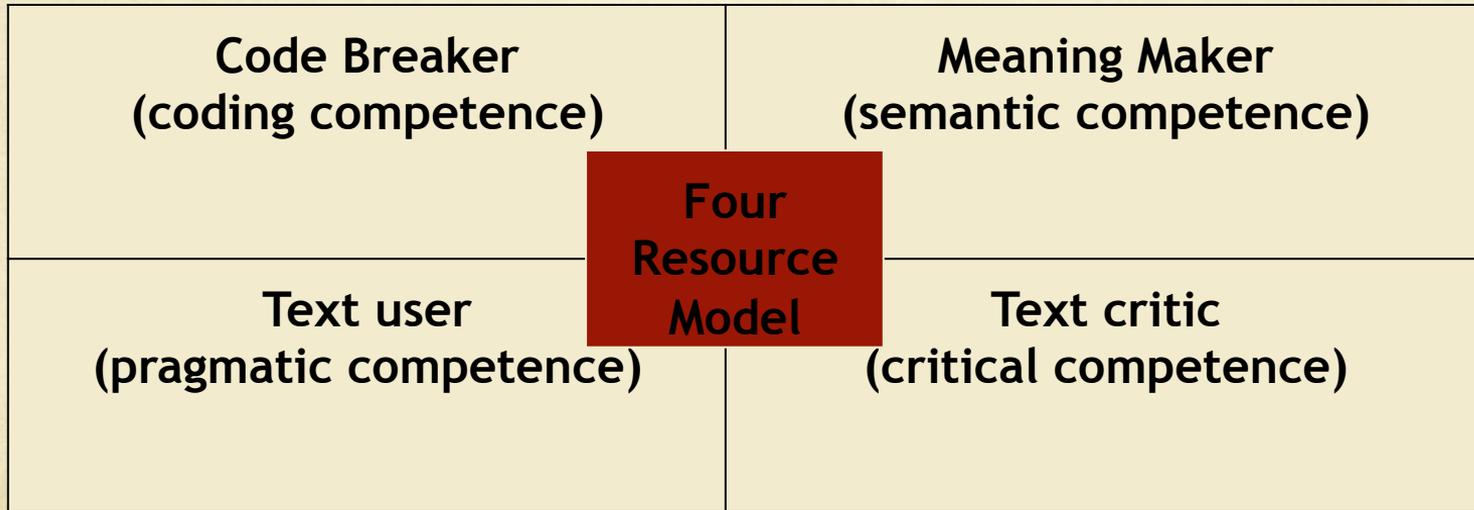


What is Critical Literacy?

- ❑ It is difficult to define critical literacy with a simplistic definition because critical literacy encompasses many complex definitions (Comber, 2001).
- ❑ To engage in critical literacy practices, students and teachers will be asking complicated questions about identities, social language practices and power relations as well examining these relationships (Comber, 2001; Vasquez, 1999).
- ❑ Teachers and students will use multiple literacies (i.e. written, spoken, visual, and multimodal) to address social justice issues as well as become active participants in their worlds (Comber, 2001; Vasquez, 1999).

Moving Beyond Basic Early Literacy Concepts

Luke and Freebody's **Four Resource Model** supports teachers to consider pedagogical and theoretical gaps in their teaching to help students **analyze texts critically**.



Code Breaker (coding competence)

To recognize and use literacy features such as alphabet, sounds, spelling, conventions and patterns of the text.



Meaning Maker (semantic competence)

To understand and compose meaning from texts and to draw on existing schemas.

Tell me about
the characters,
setting and
what happened
in the story?



Make a
prediction of
what will
happen next?

Text user (pragmatic competence)

To use texts for purpose.



Text critic (critical competence)

To understand that texts are not neutral and that they represent particular views, silence others, and influence people's ideas.



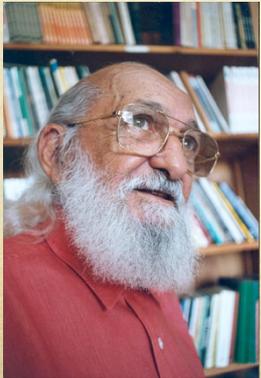
The more educators and
the people investigate
the people's thinking,
and are thus jointly
educated, the more they
continue to investigate.

Paulo Freire

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Reading the Word and the World

- Who has a voice in the text?
- How else might these characters' story be told?
- Are there silent voices that are not immediately apparent?
- How might the text be rewritten to give voice to the silenced?



language is
never
neutral.

Paulo Freire



Critical Action in Early Childhood

- ❑ In Ryan Bourke's (2008) first grade class, the 'normalcy' of traditional fairy tale roles of the protagonist and antagonist characters was interrogated by first graders as they established themselves in the character's individual perspectives.
- ❑ As these first grade students began to 'experience' the perspective of a fairy tale character, they viewed the traditional situation from a different perspective, resulting in reconsidering the element of justice.

My Mini Study

- Fall 2013- Studied a Private Preschool Class serving middle class children.
- Using Each Kindness by Jacqueline Woodson, I observed a read aloud by the teacher.
- Findings- Early Childhood Educators continue to place a primary focus on the concepts of print even though children were pointing out injustices.
- Implications- Early Childhood Educators need to push boundaries as they choose books that promote social justice and they should attend to the critical discussion brought up by students.



(Un)Covering Bias	Pushing Boundaries

In Small Groups:

1. Choose books to review
2. Use the chart on your table to record your thoughts
3. Use the guiding questions to promote discussion

Questions to Consider

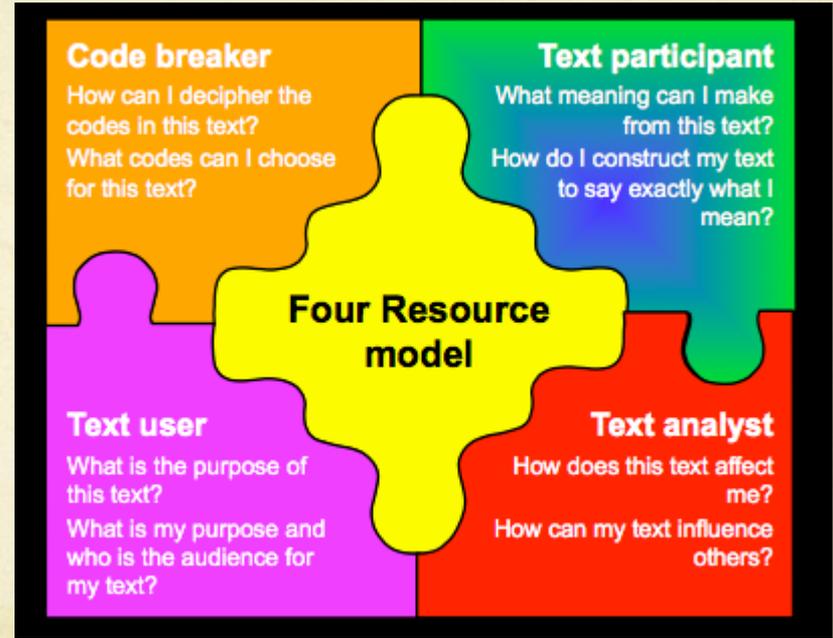
- 1 What do the characters look like?
- 2 What do the characters value? What is the moral of the story?
- 3 Who makes decisions? Who has the power to decide?
- 4 Are any characters portrayed negatively?
 - a. What makes the character *bad*?
 - b. Who gets *hurt* and who does not?
- 5 What is considered *common sense*?
- 6 What languages are used? How? Why?
- 7 What are the direct/indirect statements made about race, SES, geographical locations, and power/intelligence?
- 8 Do students of color see themselves in one of the characters?
- 9 Do the books serve to introduce a superficial artifact of *difference*?
- 10 Are dominant-culture models embodied in *othered* characters?



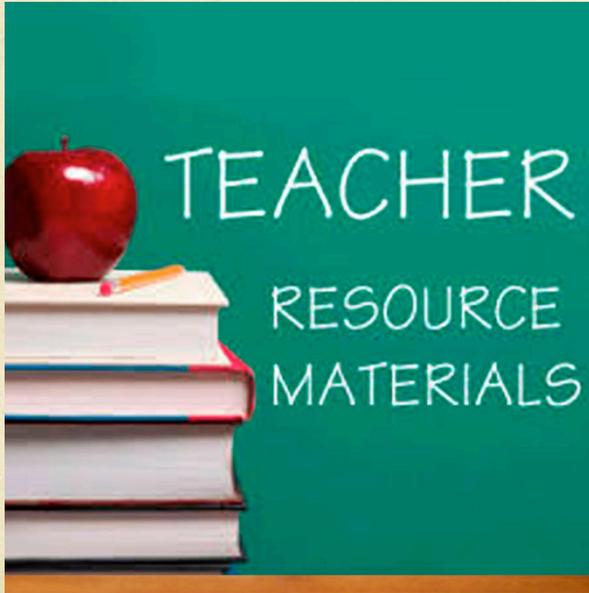
(Michael-Luna, 2009)

Survey Reflection

- ❑ Please take a moment to review your initial survey.
- ❑ Have your thoughts changed?
- ❑ What is your next step?



Teacher Resources



- Articles
- Examples of Questions to Consider
- Websites
- Organizations
- Lesson Plan

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