
Introduction

When Alice Rumphius (in *Miss Rumphius* by Barbara Cooney, 1982) was a little girl, she listened to her grandfather's "stories of faraway places" and declared that "When I grow up, I too will go to faraway places, and when I grow old, I too will live beside the sea." Her grandfather replied, "That is all very well, little Alice . . . but there is a third thing you must do You must do something to make the world more beautiful."

In today's world, those "faraway places" aren't so far away any more and may not seem as exotic as they did to Miss Rumphius. Many of today's children will visit the faraway places of other lands in their lifetimes. Yet, many others won't, although their lives will be greatly affected by what happens in distant countries whose people and cultures may still seem utterly foreign. Indeed, the classmates sitting next to them in school may be recent immigrants from faraway places. Thus, the need to understand the experiences and perspectives of these recent arrivals and places from which they come is immediate.

In the past 40 years, the United States has made remarkable strides in raising awareness of and appreciation for the multiple cultures and ethnicities within our own country (even while, admittedly, much work remains to be done to achieve true equity and justice). Can we say the same thing about our accomplishments toward international understanding and respect? At a time when our nation often seems preoccupied with terrorism from abroad and securing our national borders from perceived threats—political, economic, religious—perhaps we need to remember Alice's grandfather's lesson that we all "need to do something to make the *world* more beautiful" (emphasis added).

What can that be? Young Alice did not know, but she eventually discovered what she could do, and that became her legacy. We, too, can do something to make the world more beautiful by bringing the world home to our children through literature. Then, if they grow up

to be world travelers, they will feel like they already know something about the faraway places they visit; and if not, they will have their horizons widened far beyond the places they experience first hand. Either way, they will have the opportunity to enrich their lives through the knowledge about and empathy for other people they can gain in the pages of well-written children's books.

In the aftermath of World War II, Jella Lepman, a German Jew and founder of the International Youth Library and the International Board on Books for Young People, had a vision of the capacity of children's books to build bridges of understanding between children across cultures and countries (Lepman, 1964/2002). She labored unceasingly to make her dream a reality so that another war like that one would never happen again. More than ever in our contemporary world, we need to fulfill that promise. As teachers, we *can* bring the world to our students in a positive manner with the help of excellent global literature. We can inspire the next generation to reach out and welcome diversity, to eagerly learn more about other people, to work for solutions to global challenges with fellow human beings from around the world, to promote world peace, understanding, and cooperation rather than strife and conflict.

Does this appeal sound high-minded and idealistic? We hope so! We also believe that it is realistic, possible, and necessary. It is vitally important, and it can be *our* legacy. This book aims to convince elementary and middle school teachers of the importance and relevance of embracing a global perspective, to demonstrate the value of global children's literature for gaining that viewpoint, to introduce global literature available in the United States, to inspire you to incorporate this literature in your instruction across the curriculum, and to provide practical ideas for doing so.

Organization of the Book

This book is organized into two major parts preceded by an opening chapter. The first chapter provides a background of the context in which American children's lives are affected by an increasingly diverse society within our country and by the world beyond our national boundaries, an overview of global children's literature past and present, and how we define *global literature*. We also demonstrate the need for global literature in our multicultural society: specifically, ways that this literature benefits *all* children's cognitive, emotional, moral, and social development. We explain how the use

of global literature in the elementary and middle school curriculum can help to accomplish this goal.

Part I, then, focuses on ways to infuse global literature throughout the curriculum. We first describe a framework for literary theme studies and how these can be a means for integrating the curriculum. From this foundation, we explore the purposes and uses of global literature in specific curricular areas, including language arts; the content areas of social studies, science, and math; and the arts. In each curricular area, we include practical teaching ideas and book examples from all genres and highlight many award-winning titles.

Part II addresses several issues that you are likely to face as you try to include more global literature in your classroom instruction. We explain how we can determine the authenticity of global books. We also discuss other factors in book selection, such as literary merit and how translation influences a book's quality, and we address such contemporary pressures teachers face as standards, mandated curricula, testing, and local community attitudes. In the final chapter, we explore next steps for teachers, including ways to get started with using global literature in your teaching.

Throughout the book, you will find some special features. These include profiles of authors, illustrators, and other prominent figures in global children's literature. We also provide classroom vignettes written by teachers who already use global literature in their classrooms. Ideas for technology connections and suggested children's books appear in each chapter. A particularly important feature of this book is the companion CD with three resources: (A) a list of further reading for your own personal and professional development, (B) resources that can help you locate and continue learning more about global literature, and (C) annotations and interest levels of all the children's books cited in this book. Be sure to check this final resource regularly as you encounter books mentioned that appeal to you.

Our overall goal is for this book to be both an inspirational and practical guide for building intercultural bridges with global children's literature across the curriculum. Let's follow the example of Miss Rumphius. Let's make the world more beautiful by bringing it to our students. We invite you to join us on a global journey through the wider world of children's literature.