

Supporting Diversity through Children's Literature: Inspiring children to become life long readers by exposing them to meaningful literacy experiences.



Sharon Davisson



Early literacy is much more than learning mechanical skills

- ✈ Bits of language do not hold children's interest
- ✈ Children's characteristic ways of learning are more hands-on, playful and interactive
- ✈ Stories engage the children's minds, senses and emotions



Storytelling helps children develop literacy skills

- ✚ They develop a predilection to create *mental images* in their minds of the characters and setting
- ✚ They learn to recognize the natural sequence of a storyline
- ✚ Learn to love the sound, the rhythm and the repetition of language



Cultural Storytelling

- ✈ Passes history, explanations and values from one generation to the next
- ✈ Stories focused on lessons and values are called “teaching tales”



Waldorf approach to storytelling

- ✈ Stress on beginning – middle – end
- ✈ Enhances children's comprehension skills
- ✈ Focus on appreciating/learning oral language



Exercise in words and sounds

Turn to someone next to you and share words and/or sounds that you remember from your childhood.



Child-Dictated Story

- ✎ Is a complex cognitive endeavor that involves a “story sense”
- ✎ May express important emotional themes
- ✎ Is a print-awareness activity



Child-Dictated Story

- ✎ Encouraging child-dictated stories is a wonderful way to nurture early literacy.
- ✎ The child can express their feelings and clarify their ideas – and expand their language fluency.



It's a sad baby hippo.
He misses his mommy.



Mommy came
And she said,
“Are you okay baby?”





Story Books positive impact on early literacy







Benefits of reading storybooks daily over long periods of time on early literacy:

- ✚ Children score significantly higher on measures of vocabulary, story structure, comprehension and decoding ability
- ✚ They develop knowledge on how to handle books, recognize the print to be read and the appropriate direction for reading the print



Early literacy skills are significantly improved by

-  The interactive process between adult and child
-  The number of children involved
-  The quality of the attitudes and interactive behaviors of the teacher
-  Repetition



Early Literature through the Lens of Peace Education Criteria



Quality Literature

1. Effective literary elements of plot, theme, character, style and setting
2. Illustrations aesthetically pleasing and complement the story



Peaceful Conflict Resolution

1. Problem Solving
2. Understanding other's perspectives
3. Escalation and de-escalation of conflict
4. Communication Skills
5. Taking Action



1. Reflects diversity in racial and cultural backgrounds
2. No stereotyping, is contemporary
3. Reflects equity in gender roles
4. Unbiased representation of age, class, culture, religion, ability
5. Differing family makeup and lifestyles
6. Represents different languages



Community - Caring and Respect

1. Sharing decision making
2. Collaboration and cooperation
3. Empathy
4. Feelings
5. Kindness and friendship
6. Respect and care for nature
7. Taking action

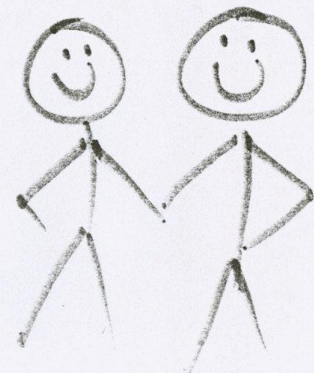
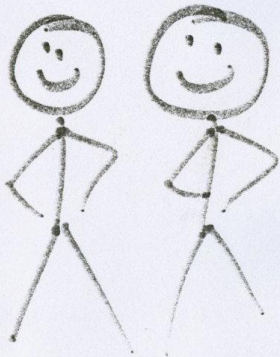
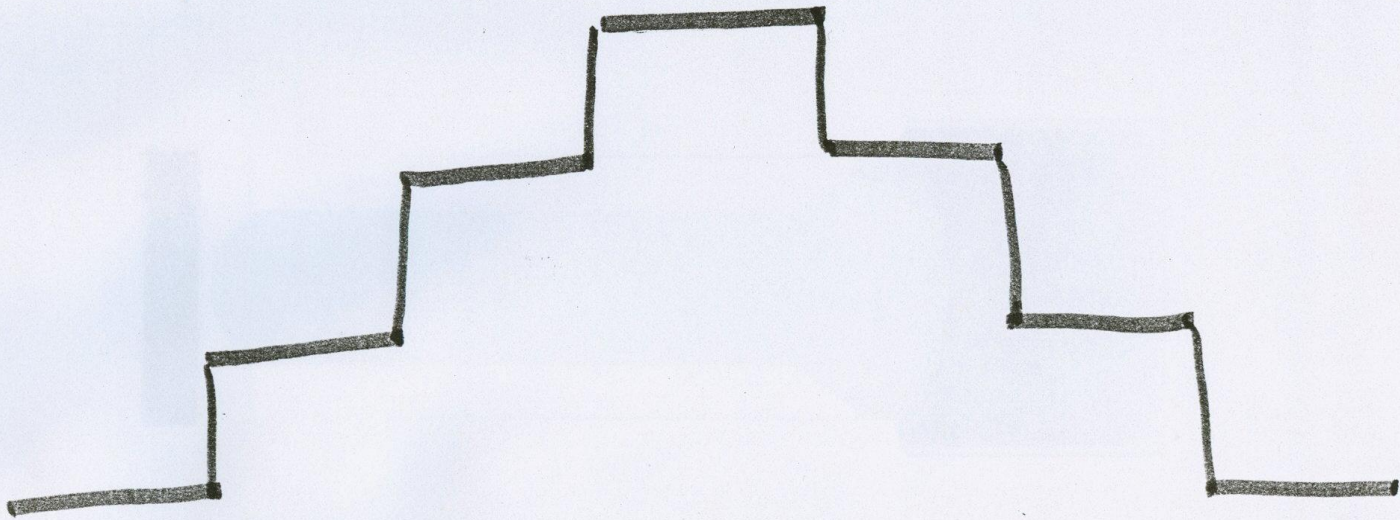
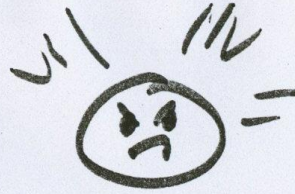


Peaceful Conflict Resolution

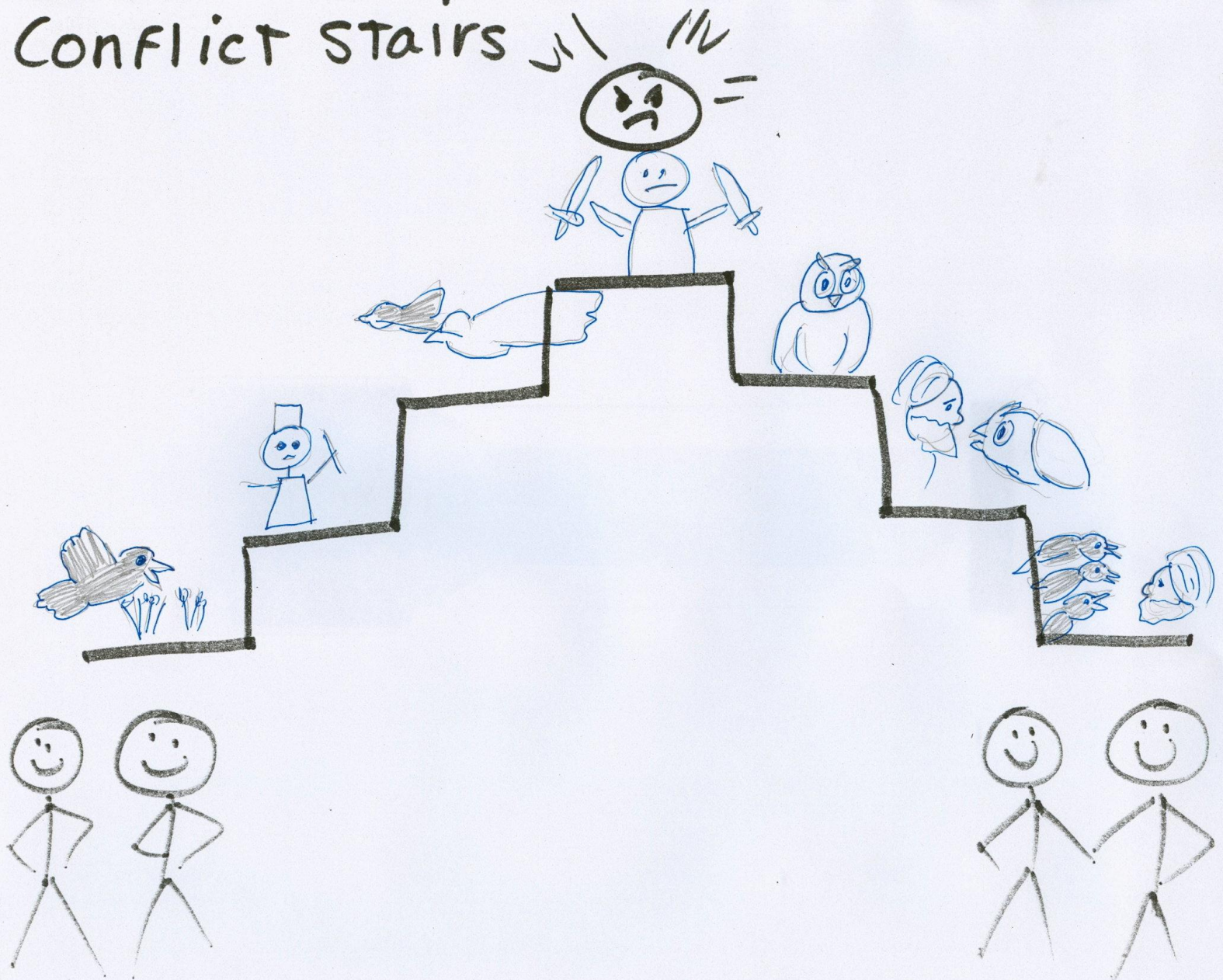
Six Crows

By Leo Lionni

Conflict Stairs



Conflict Stairs





An Anti-Bias Approach

Create a safe and trusting environment that promotes and embraces issues of equity and fairness.



Young children cannot be expected to develop a sensitivity toward others merely because they are told to do so. . . Literature allows individuals to share in the lives of others; it can also provide an avenue for multicultural understanding.

Young Children and Picture Books by Mary Jalongo



When children do not have direct experience of a group, they are particularly vulnerable to stereotypes and bias in society and the media.



What is a stereotype?

A stereotype is an oversimplified, generalized image describing all individuals in a group as having the same characteristics, that is to say, in appearance, in behavior, in beliefs. While there may be a germ of truth in a stereotype, the image usually represents an . . . exaggeration of that truth. . ."

Council on Interracial Books for Children (1978)



Research has shown that high quality children's literature can have a lasting positive impact on the child's attitude toward differences.



Literature that dispels gender stereotypes helps change children's attitudes in positive way.



Dispel Gender Stereotypes

- 🕊 Look for books that portray girls/women who have active, dynamic roles.
- 🕊 Individuals are portrayed with distinctive personalities irrespective of their gender
- 🕊 Achievements are not evaluated on the basis of gender
- 🕊 Occupations are represented as gender free



Research shows that children's attitudes change in a positive way after they are exposed to books that portray different ethnic and racial groups in a positive light.



Anti-Bias literature changes children's attitudes in a positive way toward diversity.

✈ This is especially true when there is discussion about the book and,

✈ If the book contain characters that the children can relate to and gain a sense of common humanity.



An Anti–Bias Approach
Brother Eagle, Sister Sky
paintings by Susan Jeffers

Faces

By Shelley Rotner & Ken Kreisler

Amazing Grace

by Mary Hoffman



An Anti-Bias Approach

It is essential to make a concerted effort to create a curriculum that effectively counteracts stereotypes and bias.



An Anti-Bias Approach

✈ Children's literature offers opportunity to appreciate and value racial and ethnic diversity.



Young children *do* notice race

- ✚ By 6 months of age infants react to racial differences
- ✚ By age 3 or 4, most children have a rudimentary concept of race and can identify, match and label by racial group.
- ✚ Prejudice and bias depends upon children's racial environment, the values they are learning and whether or not stereotypes are challenged



An Exercise in Differences

✈ Stand up.

✈ Arrange yourselves around your table according to your height.




An Exercise in Differences, cont.

 **Arrange yourselves according to the color of your hair.**



An Exercise in Differences, cont.

 **Arrange yourselves according to how active the melanin is in your skin**



An Exercise in Differences, cont.

 **Spend about 5 minutes discussing:**

 **What attribute did you choose to be at the “beginning of the circle?” “The end?”**

 **How did you make your decisions?**

 **How did you feel about the different directions?**



We invite you to continue this journey of
telling meaningful stories and finding
meaningful literature to enrich children's
lives.



Look for high quality stories and literature that celebrates diversity, encourages peaceful problem solving, and fosters community, caring and respect,

