

Volume III, Issue 2

**WOW Stories: Connections from the Classroom** is a regular on-line publication of WOW containing vignettes written by classroom educators about children's experiences reading and responding to literature in the classroom setting.

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**Becoming Critical Readers through Engagements with International and**

## Multicultural Literature

*As a teacher, critical thinking and questioning are my primary goals for students.* - Courtney Bauer

One of the goals of Worlds of Words is to connect children with international literature. While encouraging children to read international literature is an important goal, the mission of WOW goes further to focus on using these reading experiences to promote intercultural understanding through critical explorations of the literature and the world.

In this issue of *WOW Stories: Connections from the Classroom* we share five vignettes of classroom engagements and literacy experiences that encourage critical reading. While the authors are at different grade levels and use diverse strategies, they share a commitment to helping the students they work with become more knowledgeable, careful thinkers about books, the book world, and their own world.

In the first vignette, Courtney Bauer describes how she and her fourth graders used critical literacy strategies to explore narratives documenting children's lives during the Holocaust. Next, Lorraine Wilson discusses her work exploring a conceptual understanding of refugees with grade 5/6 students in Australia. Wilson notes that critical explorations of literature depend on freedom from restrictive curricular mandates. In the third vignette, Deanne Paiva describes how her third graders analyzed the values and beliefs of characters in global literature.

Teacher knowledge is essential in order for schools to facilitate critical reading. The last vignettes explain how two different professors work with educators to strengthen their knowledge of literature and critical inquiry. Julia López-Robertson shares strategies she uses to help graduate students deepen their thinking about multicultural literature, an issue that is complicated by their lack of historical knowledge. Finally, a vignette by Kathy Short completes the issue. Short discusses how her curriculum and teaching engagements have evolved to help graduate students examine multiple perspectives and take on depth of thinking about international literature.

As you read these vignettes, think about how you connect students of all ages with literature in ways that promote intercultural understandings. Consider sharing your innovative practices by submitting a vignette to *WOW Stories*. We are interested in descriptions of interactions with literature in classrooms and libraries at preschool through graduate levels. See our [call for manuscripts and author guidelines](#) for more information.

Janine M. Schall

Editor, *WOW Stories: Connections from the Classroom*