

We're not in Kansas anymore: Chinese Americans mirrored in picture books at Northeast Kansas Library System member libraries

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Abstract:

Children's picture books can provide a window of the world from which small children learn other cultures. Many children explore people of other cultures from the picture books before they encounter those cultures in their early lives (Cai 1994, p. 169). The potential of these picture books not only enrich the multicultural resources (Harada, 1995, p. 135), but also transmit the values and attitudes for young readers through storytelling (Morgan, 2009, p. 187). Children's picture books have a great impact on children's attitudes towards those people who are different from themselves. As a librarian, I am always curious what images of Chinese and Chinese Americans are painted in the minds of children of Mid-Western United States, where the communities are predominantly white. By studying books selected by the local public libraries, we can determine what young readers learn about the Chinese and Chinese American cultures.

The Northeast Kansas Library System (NEKLS) is one of the seven regional library systems of cooperating libraries in Kansas. There are 16 small rural public libraries supported by NEKLS in the Greater Kansas City area.¹ This study will investigate the 86 picture books that feature Chinese culture and characters available in these 16 libraries. The focus will be on how these picture books portray Chinese and Chinese Americans, and how they reflect the Chinese culture. The books will be categorized based on the main themes and stories which portray Chinese and Chinese Americans cultural content. The ethnicity of authors and illustrators will also be examined. A list of the selected 86 picture books and an annotation will be included in this study, providing the main themes and stories of 86 picture books.

This study is limited to picture books written and/or illustrated by Chinese Americans that contain cultural content. The objectives of this study are:

¹The 16 libraries are Atchison Public Library, Baldwin City Public Library, Basehor Community Library, Bonner Springs Public Library, Effingham Community Library, Hiawatha, Morrill Public Library, Leavenworth Public Library, Lyndon Carnegie Library, McLouth Public Library, Meriden Community Library, Osawatimie Public Library, Ottawa Public Library, Seneca Free Library, Tonganoxie Public Library, Valley Falls Delaware Township Library, and Winchester Public Library.

- To investigate the character portrayal, language usage, cultural information, and visual accuracy in these children books
- To present stereotypes in these picture books
- To explore the viewpoints of outsider versus insider

Appendix A: A list of 86 selected children picture books (by chronically order)

Appendix B: An annotation of the 86 selected children picture books

REFERENCES

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