

■ ARTICLES

Injustice and Irony: Students Respond to Japanese American Internment Picturebooks

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Youngs describes how fifth graders interpreted Japanese American Internment picturebooks and developed awareness of injustice and irony as presented in the visual and written narratives.

IDEOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT childhood play into the production and selection of children's literature. Various ideologies proclaim that children should be happy and free from stories of evil, children's literature should help children encounter the joys in life, it should be filled with bright colors to keep children's attention, and it should teach a good lesson (Nodelman & Reimer, 2003; Tunnell & Jacobs, 2008). However, many authors and illustrators of historical fiction challenge mainstream or traditional ideologies by telling stories that shed light on some darker moments in human history. They challenge the notion that children should only be exposed to literature that has a happy ending or mirrors dominant ideologies.

Authors Allen Say, Yoshiko Uchida, Amy Lee-Tai, and Eve Bunting give voice to Japanese Americans and their experiences during World War II and their time in internment camps. These authors tell the story of the racism, prejudice, and discrimination that many endured in their *home* of the United States. Say, Uchida, Lee-Tai, and Bunting have faith in children to understand and to learn from these moments in American history. Collectively, they give insight in obvious and sometimes subtle ways to the

major issues of the Japanese American legacy and to the broader issue of systemic racism. Their picturebooks create spaces for readers to discuss and contemplate issues of fairness and justice in American history.

The purpose of this article is to share how students in a fifth-grade classroom constructed interpretations of four Japanese American Internment historical fiction picturebooks: *Home of the Brave* (Say, 2002), *The Bracelet* (Uchida, 1993), *So Far from the Sea* (Bunting, 1998), and *A Place Where Sunflowers Grow* (Lee-Tai, 2006). It also shows how readers negotiated meaning during read-alouds and how instruction focusing on visual design elements, picturebook design, aspects of genre, and historical background knowledge influenced students' responses and helped them construct emerging hypotheses about Japanese American Internment gleaned through the visual and textual narratives. Visual images refer to all the images, illustrations, or pictures within the narrative, and design elements refer to the ways in which the picturebook is put together. The design includes the peritext, which consists of all the features that are not part of the narrative (e.g., cover, back cover, jacket, title page, dedication, author's note). Design also refers to size, shape, framing, layout, and so forth.

Multimodality and Picturebook Reading

Picturebook reading is an active process of constructing meaning in transaction with visual images, written narratives, and design elements. Readers construct meaning and are supported and limited by the context in which they are reading (Beach, 1993; Iser, 1978; Rosenblatt, 1978; Tompkins, 1980). When reading a picturebook, readers are constructors of meaning as they fill the gaps created by the difference between temporal and spatial information (Kress, 2003; Lewis, 2001; Moebius, 1986). In other words, there are many gaps left between the narrative told in the visual images and the narrative told with the printed words. These gaps create ambiguity and warrant inspection. Iser (1980) stated, "reading is only a pleasure when it is active and creative" (p. 51). Rosenblatt (1978, 1982) and Iser (1978, 1980) suggested that readers fill in the gaps found in texts with prior experiences and imagination. According to Iser (1980), each reader fills in the gap in his or her own unique way; however, the reader does not have complete autonomy to fill in the gaps because this active process is constrained by context and textual and visual elements.

Even though a great deal of attention has been brought to the synergistic relationship between text and image (Sipe, 1998, 2000), printed text is still privileged over images in traditional school settings (Kress, 2010). If readers of historical fiction picturebooks focus only on the written text, they will miss out on the meaning potentials inherent in the symbolic images and visual narrative (Youngs, 2010; Youngs & Serafini, 2011). Portrayal of history through visual images is complex because illustrators draw on

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cultural icons, symbols, and motifs to challenge readers to expand their interpretations of historical events (Albers, 2008; Youngs & Serafini, 2011).

Engaging with historical fiction picturebooks requires readers to relate to historical figures/characters and events as portrayed through the textual *and* visual narrative (Levstik, 1989). Picturebooks are multimodal ensembles, conveying meaning with more than one mode: namely, written narrative, visual images, and design elements. As such, illustrators, authors, and publishers of historical fiction picturebooks expect readers to attend to all three modes to construct meaning. Understanding the multimodal nature of these texts can enhance readers' literary, visual, and historical understandings (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; Serafini, 2010; Unsworth & Wheeler, 2002), and as readers learn to attend to various modes within any given picturebook, they broaden the possibilities for the construction of meaning (Albers, 2008).

Therefore, this study addressed the question: What types of responses and understandings do readers construct during their interactions with Japanese American Internment historical fiction picturebooks with focused lessons on genre, visual images, and design elements?

Methods

Context

This study was conducted over the course of four months in a fifth-grade classroom at Fredrickson Elementary School (pseudonyms used throughout), located in a suburban area of a midsized city in the western United States in collaboration with Emily, the classroom teacher. Emily was in her third year of teaching at the time of the study. Reports from the school district indicated the following demographic information for Fredrickson Elementary: 64% Caucasian, 20% Hispanic, 5% African American, 8% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 2% American Indian/Alaskan native. Twenty-two percent of the student population qualified for free and reduced lunches, and 8% were students with limited English proficiency. This school was required to use a core reading program for the majority of reading instruction.

There were 26 students in the class at the time of the study. The ethnic makeup of this class consisted of 20 Anglo European students, two African American, and four Hispanic. This class had two students with an individualized education plan and one receiving ELL services. Five students were reading below grade level, 18 at grade level, and three above.

Initially, I observed Emily's classroom for five weeks. I was in the classroom three times a week during the 90-minute reading block to observe students responding to literature during a picturebook read-aloud. Observations revealed a literacy block with a heavy emphasis on learning vocabulary. The teacher utilized a multitude of instructional strategies to present words to students and provide ways for them to practice the words. Comprehension strategy work was also a key component as directed by the core program. Students were ability grouped for guided reading of leveled readers with the teacher.

Procedure

After my initial observations, I conducted a genre unit of study on historical fiction picturebooks. I became the teacher, and Emily became the observer. We collaborated throughout the entire study, but for those two weeks, I modeled for Emily explicit instruction on genre, picturebook design, and reading visual images through interactive read-alouds. The four Japanese American Internment picturebooks were embedded within the larger genre study and isolated for analysis for this particular article. I designed each lesson within the study to build on each other, and the lessons were constructed in a progression to scaffold students' understanding of the historical fiction picturebook genre, visual images, design elements, and the historical events. See Figure 1 for the order, a description, and the instructional focus for each book.

The first three lessons focused on characteristics of historical fiction, the importance of understanding genre, and what knowledge of genre can do for a reader. I read aloud *So Far from the Sea* for these lessons. We focused on learning what historical fiction is, and we analyzed how it compares with other genres. We developed and recorded characteristics of historical fiction and strategies on how to read historical fiction picturebooks. Then, as a class, we combined all the charts and created "Room 108's Guide to Reading Historical Fiction Picturebooks" (see Figure 2) because we wanted to share what we learned about reading in this genre with the other fifth-grade classes.

I also introduced students to elements of design and illustrative techniques. As I read *So Far From the Sea*, I

demonstrated how to look at peritextual features, such as the endpages, title page, and cultural images such as the Boy Scout uniform. This picturebook acted as a cornerstone text, meaning we turned to this text again and again to develop understandings. In these read-alouds, I modeled how to identify various cultural images and analyze their meaning within the illustrations. and we analyzed the significance of the cutout image on the title page. I modeled with one book, charted out the various design elements and illustrative techniques, and then encouraged and supported students' use of these features in their construction of meaning with subsequent books. Most of the books in this study were read on multiple occasions, which afforded students time to consider and develop their interpretations. They made connections across books, and when we reread various picturebooks, the students began to enhance their understandings as they compared and contrasted books. These picturebooks are complex and require multiple readings to deepen readers' understandings.

Next, I utilized a disruption of text activity (Serafini, 2006) with *Home of the Brave*. Disruption of text is an activity in which the text and illustrations are disrupted for close analysis. During the disruption of text, students read and interacted with this book over a period of three days. On the first day, I conducted a read-aloud as students shared ideas and negotiated meaning as a reading community. We also attended to peritextual features, cultural images, and connections with primary source documents, including a study of Dortehea Lange's (1942) photograph (Figure 3) that inspired Say's portrait of the two girls within the picturebook.

On the second and third days, in small groups, some students read and responded to only the typed text. They sat in a small circle and read aloud the text in a Readers Theatre style, then commented on their ideas and confusions. Other small groups viewed the illustration-only storyboard. Students used sticky notes to record ideas and then placed a sticky note next to each image. All students participated in both text and image activity. At the end of the third day, we read the book one last time, and students wrote ideas in a reading log and then shared them with the whole group.

The last lessons with these four picturebooks focused on reading the visual images and design elements to enhance our understanding of the historical narrative. For these lessons, I read aloud *The Bracelet* and *A Place Where Sunflowers Grow*. Specifically for these lessons, we focused on peritextual features, motif, color, visual symbols, framing, and demand /offer (see Figure 2 for a description of these elements). The four Japanese American Internment picturebooks were all read in whole-class read-aloud settings.

FIGURE 1

Order, description, and instructional focus of a research study on historical fiction picturebooks in a fifth-grade class

Book	Summary	Instructional Focus
Bunting, E. (1998). <i>So far from the sea</i> . (C. K. Soentpiet, Illus.). New York, NY: Clarion.	This picturebook is a retrospective narrative of a family visiting what is left of Manzanar Relocation Center. The father, mother, son Thomas, and daughter Laura visit the grave of the grandfather who became ill and died in the center. The father was 8 years old at the time, and as he remembers, he tells the story to his children prompted by their questions of his experience. Bunting uses flashbacks, and Soentpiet oscillates between black-and-white drawings to depict 1942 and color to depict the present day. Bunting tells the story from Laura's point of view.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ What is historical fiction? □ Characteristics and strategies for approaching and reading historical fiction picturebooks
Say, A. (2002). <i>Home of the brave</i> . Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.	This picturebook presents a surrealistic story about a young man who travels back in time to a Japanese American relocation camp where his grandparents and parents were sent during World War II. He encounters children who are begging for him to take them home; they are all wearing the same gray uniform and all have a tag hanging from a button. He experiences the same prejudices and loss of control that the internees experienced. When he awakens at the end of the story, there are children standing over him. They ask him to take them home, but the children are Native American, creating a parallel and suggesting irony between the plights of Native Americans and Japanese Americans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Importance of peritextual features: endpages and title page □ Attend to historical and cultural images. □ Intertextual connections with primary source documents
Uchida, Y. (1993). <i>The bracelet</i> . (J. Yardley, Illus.). New York, NY: Philomel.	This story is about a little girl, Emi, who is Japanese American. It begins on the eve of her family's relocation. Her neighbor friend, Laurie, gives her a bracelet to take to the camp. Emi is angered by the confusion and disloyalty that her country is showing. Uchida is purposeful in her portrayal of similarities between the two girls. They stand at the door in identical clothing. Laurie gives Emi a gift for "camp," and it is clear that Laurie does not understand what this word means in this context.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Analyze cultural icons and endpages as prologues and epilogues. □ Placement of images within illustrations to signify importance
Lee-Tai, A. (2006). <i>A place where sunflowers grow</i> . (F. Hoshino, Illus.). San Francisco, CA: Children's Book Press.	A little girl named Mari and her family are interned in the Topaz Internment Camp in the desert of Utah during World War II. The story follows Mari's journey as she leaves her home and all that she loves behind as she enters the internment camp. Art classes become available for her in the camp, but it takes her a long time to find anything to draw. Slowly, her perspective shifts from sadness and despair to hope and solace. Behind the barbed wires, with the help of the adults in the camp, she finds a piece of home in the sunflower that she plants, her artwork, and her new friend.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Analyze cutout images of cabins in peritext. □ Attend to the sunflowers as symbols of how characters coped with their situation and provided a place for hope.

Data Sources

Data sources included field notes, transcripts of whole- and small-group classroom discussions, disruption of text observational notes and recorded conversations, copies of students' reading response notebooks, and other artifacts generated during the instructional experiences and read-alouds.

Data Analysis

The first level of analysis was completed by doing a chronological analysis of the entire data set. Each read-aloud transcript, response log, and sticky note was read, and a line-by-line analysis was completed. Two broad categories were first constructed as I used Serafini and Ladd's (2008) coding scheme of literal and interpretive to determine the types of responses the students were constructing. If the

reader named either a textual or visual element that was in the book, I labeled it as literal. A comment was coded as interpretive if the idea was not directly mentioned in the words of the text or depicted in the illustrations. Because a large set of the data (65%) was coded as interpretive, I wanted to examine the nature of these interpretive responses in greater detail.

In the second phase of my analysis, I conducted a content analysis of the students' interpretive responses. I used the research question as a guide to code each interpretive response. I coded for the types of responses that the students were constructing in response to these four picturebooks. This analysis revealed that responses focused on historical empathy, historical questions, and embedded cultural symbols.

FIGURE 2

"Room 108's guide to reading historical fiction picturebooks"

Understanding the Genre of Historical Fiction Picturebooks

What Is Historical Fiction?

- Characters are usually fictional.
- An author's note is included to tell the real story and to let the reader know what part is fictional and what part is based on historical facts.
- May include historical people
- Based on historical event(s)
- May also include fictional events to help tell a story
- Can be about a person's life
- Historical fiction is partly true and is based on history.
- There are fictional parts to fill in gaps (that the author may not know about) to tell an interesting story.
- You can learn about history.
- Words can give you clues to the time the story takes place.

Types of Historical Fiction

- Historically researched with fictional characters
- Time travel: Characters from today travel back in time.
- Personal tale: The author actually lived during the historical time.
- Historical period: The story takes place during an exact time in history and in an exact place. The author's note tells how it really happened.

Understanding Genre

- Helps you know a little more about the story
- You use certain reading strategies with different genres.
- Knowing what the genre is helps tell you what to expect from the story.

- Helps you understand the structure
- You might want to read more in a genre if you like it.
- Helps you keep from getting confused

Approaching and Inferring with Historical Fiction

- First, we notice something, then we think about what it might mean.
- We have to infer what parts are historical and what parts are fictional.
- We fill in the gaps with:
 - Personal experience (things we have done in our lives)
 - Other books we have read
 - Historical knowledge (things we have learned in social studies/history lessons)
 - Information from within the book we are reading

Why Should We Pay Attention to Peritextual Resources?

- Endpages help explain the book and show the mood or more of the story.
- The cover helps you know what the book is going to be about.
- Pictures on the cover tell you some important part of the story.
- The author's note tells you opinions and tells you what is fiction and what is historical fact.
- Helps you think about the meaning of the story
- Helps you understand the book better
- Tells you what to expect when you begin reading
- The title page contains cutout images that are usually symbolic to the story or are historical symbols.

FIGURE 2

"Room 108's guide to reading historical fiction picturebooks" (continued)**Visual Design Elements***Motif*

- Continuing or repeating image
- Symbol
- An image that has meaning and stands for something else

Framing

- Framed: Helps us think we are looking through a window
- Full bleed: Invites the reader in to be a part of the story
- Breaking the frame: Excitement for the viewer

Character's Gaze

- Demand: Look right at you, demanding something from you
- Offer: Look at other characters or objects; you get to judge.

Signifying Importance: Ways Illustrators Tell You Something Is Important

- Foreground: Putting images in front or making them bigger
- Focusing: Some are in focus, and others are blurred (depth of field).
- Color: The background is one color, and objects or elements are another. Some colors stand out and catch your attention. Colors have meaning.

Why Reading Historical Fiction Is Important

- You really feel like you are in the story.
- You get to think about historic events, judge them, and critically think about them.
- You might learn something about yourself.
- Learn about other viewpoints and ideas besides your own
- Help see how times have changed
- You can learn about how all people want respect, freedom, and peace.
- Get to see history from a certain perspective
- Gives a face to the story

What Makes a Good Historical Fiction Picturebook?

- The problems in the story are believable and make sense for the time period.
- It tells a personal story.
- The characters are believable and fit in the time period.
- Has good illustrations that tell more of the story than the text
- The author and illustrator did a lot of research on the setting.
- There are a lot of details.
- Tells a good story with a theme that is important
- The illustrator uses a lot of visual design elements to show power and importance.

However, these categories were still broad and did not capture how students' understandings progressed across all the readings and across the timeline of the Japanese American Internment. So, for my last phase of data analysis, I used cultural themes found in Japanese American Internment literature as a framework to organize the interpretive responses. Teorey (2008)

discussed issues of containment, loyalty, isolation, bicultural identities, irony, injustice, and racism as themes that run through young adult literature about Japanese American Internment. I used these terms as a framework to organize the initial categories of responses but collapsed them into three overarching categories: leaving home and being rounded up and placed in camps; the conditions and

FIGURE 3

Hayward, California, two children of the Mochida family who, with their parents, are awaiting evacuation by Dorothea Lange, 1942



circumstances of the camps; and issues of injustice, irony, and control and freedom.

Results

A close analysis of the data revealed patterns across discussions, written reflections, and classroom activities. Analysis also revealed that students constructed interpretive responses because they attended to the multimodality within these texts. The students analyzed the written narrative, visual images, and design elements to construct interpretations, and these analyses and interpretations are described below for each theme.

Leaving Home and Being Rounded Up and Placed in Camps

As Executive Order 9066 was carried out, life for Japanese Americans was chaotic and filled with fear, bewilderment, and feelings of betrayal. They had no idea when or if they would ever return to their homes. In fact, many began to sell all of their worldly possessions: cars, homes, real estate, and businesses (Gruenewald, 2005; Inada, 2000). As we read the four picturebooks, students began to connect with the characters as this sense of bewilderment and betrayal was presented. The children also began to exhibit historical empathy as they tried to understand the circumstances in which Japanese Americans left their homes. After reading *The Bracelet*, Jake asked, “How would you feel if someone just came in your house with a

bunch of rifles pointed at you and told you to get out of your house? Wouldn’t you feel mad?” These questions prompted a discussion focused on fear, patriotism, and betrayal.

Then, students began to understand that once they left their homes, Japanese Americans were taken on buses, given identification tags, and taken to relocation centers. The students picked up on the term *rounded up* as it was used in the information about Japanese American Internment and within the picturebooks and authors’ notes. Attending to the visual images helped students understand the process and the emotions that Emi (from *The Bracelet*) and other characters were feeling, aided by the illustrators’ use of a variety of colors and historical scenes to help readers understand what happened in the initial days of the enactment of Executive Order 9066. The class read about and empathized with characters as they got on the buses and arrived at the camps, leaving their homes behind and entering into a world that was unknown and scary. Students attended to how both Uchida and Yardley conveyed the emotional distress of leaving home, the dominance of the U.S. government, and the sadness of being taken away.

John: It looks like thousands of government buses.

Suzette: Mhmm.

Marrisa: And soldiers are rounding them up.

Derek: They are just rounding them up.

The discussion moved on to the next page of the book.

Suzette: So in this moment, what’s happening?

Kayley: They’re at the camp.

Madison: Um, the little girl right there, she looks like she’s crying.

Sara: She’s not really happy. [followed by inaudible comments]

Brooke: That little girl, it looks like in *Home of the Brave*, they had those tags on and looks like she’s from that story.

Suzette: When the United States soldiers came to collect and get them and round them up, they were told they could bring—

Students: [overlapping] Only what they could carry.

Students’ interpretations were also included in their literature response notebooks. After reading *The Bracelet*, Chris wrote,

Even at the end of these books there is no happiness because they lost everything and they are in the camps. They were rounded up and put in prison. They had fences and could only take what they could carry.

Chris shared what he had learned about Japanese American Internment in his literature response log. His entry describes how the authors and illustrators represent the experiences across the four picturebooks; his entry reveals his interpretation that even when it was over, there was no happiness for the Japanese Americans. His use of the term *prison* captures the essence of these experiences.

The Conditions and Circumstances of the Camps

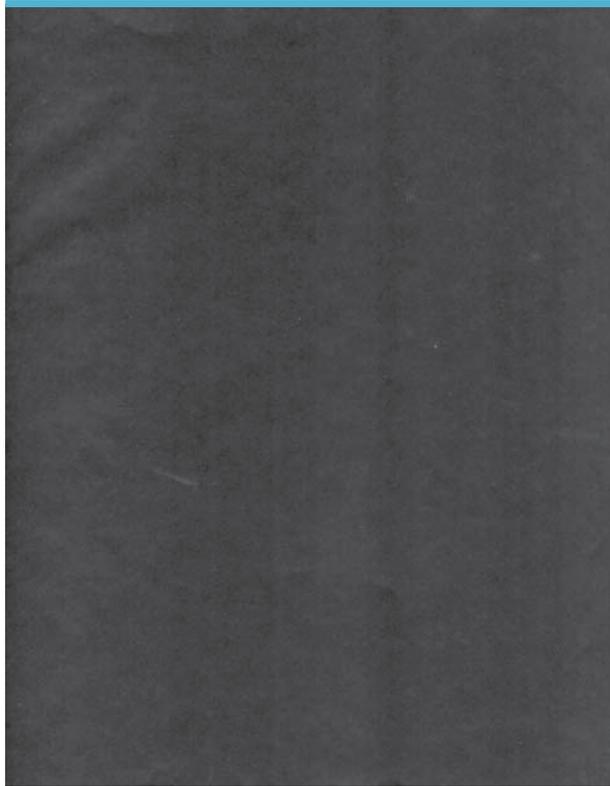
For many students, there was a slow progression of understanding. Design elements, the written narrative, and visual images supported readers' understanding of the isolation and conditions of the camps. Students analyzed

how the rounding up was portrayed in the books and then analyzed the conditions and terms on which the Japanese Americans were interned. The illustrators painted a vivid picture of the setting and conditions of these camps. As students analyzed the images, they began to understand what the characters had to leave behind and the harshness of their new "homes."

Figures 4–6 are samples of student interpretations completed during the disruption of text activity with *Home of the Brave*. In these figures, the words below each image are what some students wrote on their sticky notes during the activity. Students analyzed the interplay between the written narrative, visual images, and design elements.

FIGURE 4

Fifth-graders' responses to the endpages of *Home of the Brave* by Allen Say^a



It's black and blank,
Dark, scary, loneliness,
Bad and horrible
Sad, Ominous
It's cursed
This is just scary

^a Say, A. (2002). *Home of the brave*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

FIGURE 5

Fifth-graders' responses to this image in *Home of the Brave* by Allen Say



They really don't want
to be in this camp
The kids never look happy
There are dark clouds
and they look scared

Note. The image is from *Home of the Brave* (p. 15), by A. Say, 2002, Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

FIGURE 6

A fifth-grader's response to this illustration in *Home of the Brave* by Allen Say



They want to show the man
what they have been living in.

Note. The image is from *Home of the Brave* (p. 19), by A. Say, 2002, Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Illustrations from *Home of the Brave* by Allen Say. Copyright © 2002 by Allen Say. Reprinted by permission of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company. All rights reserved.

During this activity, students analyzed how the setting and mood were portrayed through the use of colors to understand the desolation and isolation of the places where the internment camps were built.

The setting of *Home of the Brave* is ominous. Say used various tones of black, gray, and brown to depict the conditions of the camp. His use of black endpages set the stage for the haunting scenes that followed. Students understood that the colors of endpages are purposeful and looked to them to understand mood and setting and set expectations for the reading. The cover and all the pages in the book are framed in such a way as to make the reader feel removed, like an outsider watching the experiences unfold. Say portrayed the feelings of desolation and abandonment associated with the loss of home through the use of colors, words, surrealist imagery, and design elements, and students used all of these resources to understand the conditions of these camps.

A Place Where Sunflowers Grow stands in stark contrast to *Home of the Brave*. In Lee-Tai's book, hues of yellow, green, and orange are used throughout and support the metaphor of hope and home. This was the fourth book read by the class on Japanese American Internment. In the following vignette, I bring students' attention to the last line of the story and ask them to interpret the meaning of planting the sunflowers and making a friend.

Suzette: "In that moment, her old life, and whatever her new life would be like after the war, didn't feel so far away." (p. 31) Turn to a partner and share what your thoughts are on that last line.

Jake: I think that they hold onto their culture even though they're in the prison camp.

Kaley: She knew that, like, she wouldn't be happy until she had something to remember, like sunflowers.

Sara: That sentence, I thought it meant, like, because even if the war's still going or even when the war's over, if she moves she can still remember that place, and it kind of made her happy at her home because of the sunflowers.

Brittany: I think the old life was life before the war, and it's going to be closer to home if she has a friend to pass her time.

Jake noticed the family's determination to hang on to their culture even in the face of discrimination and internment. Students looked to the symbolic nature of the sunflower and making a friend and how they would help connect life before, during, and after the war.

The condition of the camps was something that was difficult for students to grasp. The literal details were easily accessible, but the ideas and reasons behind placing the Japanese Americans into the internment camps was less accessible in the early read-alouds. However, after time, the details of the camps and the display of racism angered many students and brought about discussions of injustice, control, and irony. Students began to realize that the Japanese Americans were American citizens who were being placed in a prison based on wartime hysteria, racism, and discrimination.

Issues of Injustice, Irony, and Control and Freedom

Injustice.

Throughout the reading of these picturebooks, students began to feel a sense of injustice. They not only empathized with the characters but also became angry as they began to understand the consequences of racism and fear.

Students asked numerous historical questions. For some of the questions, I was able to take some time to provide

background information. For example, when students asked about the bombing of Pearl Harbor and how the Japanese Americans were rounded up and put into internment camps, I read aloud Executive Order 9066. In other instances, Emily recorded the questions and explained to the students that they would investigate the answers later in their social studies curriculum. Students asked broad questions that demonstrated their sense of injustice. The following list contains some of their questions:

- “Did the Japanese ever find their homes?”
- “In Japan, did they round up all the Americans and put them in a camp or not?”
- “Can they do this [put people in interment camps] now?”
- “What about Guantanamo Bay? Isn’t that the same thing?”
- “Why is it that almost every single country in World War II, and you only hear about it in World War II, rounded up somebody? You never hear, like, rounding up others. Why? What was going on in World War II that is not going on now?”

These questions, as well as others posed by the students, show a connection to the literature and an understanding of the larger issues put forth by the literature selections. The students understood that these books represent a perspective on the event, but students needed more historical background knowledge to understand some of the larger historical issues. The questions created a space for historical inquiry and set the stage for further historical investigations later in the year.

In their reading logs for *Home of the Brave*, students exhibited a sense of injustice in the Japanese American Internment and anger at the effect it had on children. Below are some students’ responses:

- “I think Japanese [American] Internment is evil.”
- “I don’t know why they put Japanese [Americans] in camps but I don’t think it is right.”
- “I am sad and I wonder how the children felt.”
- “How did the kids feel in the camps?”
- “THEY’RE JUST KIDS!!!”

Irony.

Students also came to understand the irony portrayed in *Home of the Brave* as it pertained to the relocation of Native Americans and Japanese Americans. In the following response logs and discussion transcripts, it is evident that students, after many read-alouds, began to make the connection between the displacement of Native Americans and Japanese Americans. Students recognized the parallel between these peoples’ relocation and their loss of home.

I am making a connection to Native Americans and Japanese Americans and how they were taken from their land and moved to remote places. They took away their land to make military bases and they felt they were better than the Native Americans and they just knew they could ship them to Wyoming. (Roberto, October 16)

In this book Say is showing how Native Americans and Japanese Americans are separated and lost their home. (Peyton, October 16)

Suzette: Why do you think Say included a kiva and Native American children at the end of the story?

Kali: I think the reason it shows an Indian reservation is so it could show you how the government is separating people.

Kyle: Allen Say might have tried to show that the Native Americans were also taken from their home.

Mari: I think the children want to go home with him.

Lynn: Children with tags are Japanese. The children at the end are Native American to show how Japanese were separated from their homes and Native Americans were, too.

These written and verbal responses were constructed from multiple readings and developing understandings of how the book ended. Students were initially perplexed at the two different sets of children portrayed in the book. Students interpreted the use of a kiva to be representative of an Indian reservation and understood that Say wanted to show how both Japanese Americans and Native Americans were separated from their homes. The children made these connections as they learned more historical information about both groups of Americans, and then used this information for analysis and interpretation. Their written responses reflected sophisticated understandings about how this piece of literature worked and the irony that Say was expressing.

Control and Freedom.

The tag placed on each Japanese American internee is an identifiable feature of internees. Lange photographed two young girls from the Mochida family who were being processed for relocation camps. Say, in *Home of the Brave*, used this famous photograph as an inspiration for his illustration of the children portrayed in the book (see Figures 3 and 5).

Say used the tags as a symbol of confusion, control, identity, and in the end, freedom. His use of the tag in numerous places and in the shape of a bird signals to the reader that

there is more to it than identification. Yardley also included images of the tag on the title page of *The Bracelet* and illustrated Emi and other internees in the camp wearing the same tags. In the next vignette, during a read-aloud of *The Bracelet*, students began to analyze why the government placed the tags on the Japanese Americans:

Chris: Based on the other books, the tag is a way for the American government to identify them.

Peyton: It could be used to separate them.

John: Used to track the prisoners so they don't escape.

In this next vignette, students negotiate the possible meaning of the cutout image of a tag on the title page of *Home of the Brave*:

Christian: Can we make connections?

Suzette: Yes.

Christian: Cuz that sort of reminds me of how when the Germans rounded up the Jews and the Jews had to wear the star of David.

Denise: The tags for Japanese [Americans] were the same thing.

John: I'm thinking maybe that one fell off, and then it got blown away by the wind so that it got separated from the family.

Amy: I think it's cuz they were, I think that they had just got out of the camps.

Sarah: And are throwing down the tag.

Suzette: Why do you say that?

Sarah: Because of their freedom.

Students recognized the tag and connected it to the two other books read on Japanese American Internment. All four illustrators had placed the tag on the internees, and these students recognized the tag as a historical icon to Japanese American Internment based on the picturebooks read.

At the end of *Home of the Brave*, the surrealistic mood evolves as portrayed by the color change and modern temporal framing of the last image as the children release the tags symbolically into the air. In the next vignette, students attend to alternate meanings of the tag and how this iconic image can be turned into something different within the visual images.

Isha: On the last page where all the tags are in the air, I think that means they are free.

Sara: They turned into doves.

Kali: Doves can mean peace and freedom.

Suzette: What would peace and freedom mean to a

Japanese American internee?

Devin: Say released the tags to show they can trust Americans again.

John: The Americans trust them again.

Peyton: They *are* American.

The comment by Peyton is significant in demonstrating the developing understanding that the students had about Japanese American Internment in general. She made the point quite clear that they were Americans, and she captured the sense of confusion and irony of the reading in her one line to close this study.

These books portray a sense of loss, anger, confusion, and hope. They convey these messages through both text and visual images. As students' historical understandings deepened, they began to develop an emerging understanding of the Japanese American Internment that set the stage for historical inquiry in their social studies curriculum. Students interpreted the perspectives of the authors and illustrators, made connections within the visual images, and empathized with the living conditions of the internees and the plight of the main characters. There was not enough time in the study to examine all the historical aspects of the topic, but these books helped students make broad connections across time and understand human emotion, injustice, irony, and conflict.

Implications

This study reveals the potential of reading complex picturebooks in intermediate-grade classrooms. Historical fiction picturebooks are read in classrooms on a regular basis as a way to teach and engage students with social studies content (Kiefer, 2007). How readers interpret texts, in particular children's literature focused on multicultural groups, is an important consideration. Focusing on the instructional practices that move readers beyond the literal and encourages them to construct meanings from a variety of perspectives is important if students are to develop critical understandings.

The data revealed that this class of fifth graders was capable of constructing interpretive responses to literature and that their responses were influenced by other texts and events over time. Throughout the study, various lessons were constructed to enhance awareness of visual images and design elements to help students understand the multimodal nature of picturebooks. By presenting the picturebook as a multimodal construction (Kress, 2003), students were offered various resources to use in constructing meaning. This study highlights the complex nature of teaching and reading historical fiction picturebooks. It

makes a case for fostering multidisciplinary understandings to help facilitate readers' understanding of various texts and historical eras. Historical fiction picturebooks are complex texts and, as such, require a multifaceted approach to teaching that includes attention to visual images, genre, written narrative, design features, and historical concepts.

The National Standards for History call for students to compare and contrast different sets of ideas and analyze historical fiction. Throughout the study, students compared four picturebooks that present differing viewpoints of the Japanese American Internment. The children also compared the texts with other historical fiction picturebooks in the larger study across three other historical eras. Through the disruption of text, students analyzed how historical fiction works. In addition, a variety of lessons and inquiry questions were used to address historical fiction as a genre and to teach students to use various visual design elements to construct interpretations. These four picturebooks created a space for students to initiate questions about the Japanese American Internment and

Students asked questions and began to see similarities across historically marginalized groups as they made connections among the internments of Native Americans, Japanese Americans, and African Americans. This type of critical thinking enhanced historical and literary understandings and created a space for students to consider issues of injustice and irony.

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