

Applying Anti-Racist Teaching Practices from Coursework to Fieldwork: An Analysis of the

McGraw Hill Wonders Text

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Introduction- Are the stories within basal reading programs anti-racist and socially conscious?

Basal reading programs are used in schools all across the nation. Bartholomew Consolidated School Corporation utilizes one of the most well known publishing company's basal reading program, Wonders. Basal reading programs are a great way to provide sequential structure to Reading curriculum, but should structure hold as much significance as social content when it comes to picking out material for a Reading class? I decided to analyze the McGraw Hill Wonders 6th Grade Reading Literature Anthology and align it with Enid Lee's anti-racist teaching practices. My first student teaching placement was in a 6th grade classroom so I wanted to look at that grade-level's curriculum. The Wonders text has stories from a variety of genres, so to have valid comparisons presented in the results I decided to focus solely on the Realistic Fiction. Realistic Fiction is a made-up story that could happen because it has lifelike settings, characters, and plots. I picked Realistic Fiction because the stories within this genre are similar to real life situations. If written mindfully, they are able to provide meaningful opportunity to promote representation, whereas in Non-Fiction, elements of the stories can not be changed to cater to representation because it could change the account of the story. After choosing the genre, I read through the three stories and examined them for the use of the principles of anti-racist teaching as described by Lee (Lee, 2009). I categorized each story into one of the four stages Lee outlines: Surface stage, transitional stage, structural stage, and social change stage (Lee, 2009).

Methods

- Examined the language and images used
- Considered a variety of students' perspectives
- Researched the authors
- Categorized each story by how well they...
 - Authentically represented the members of the communities they are written about
 - Avoided stereotypes
 - Took into account potential reader's perspectives

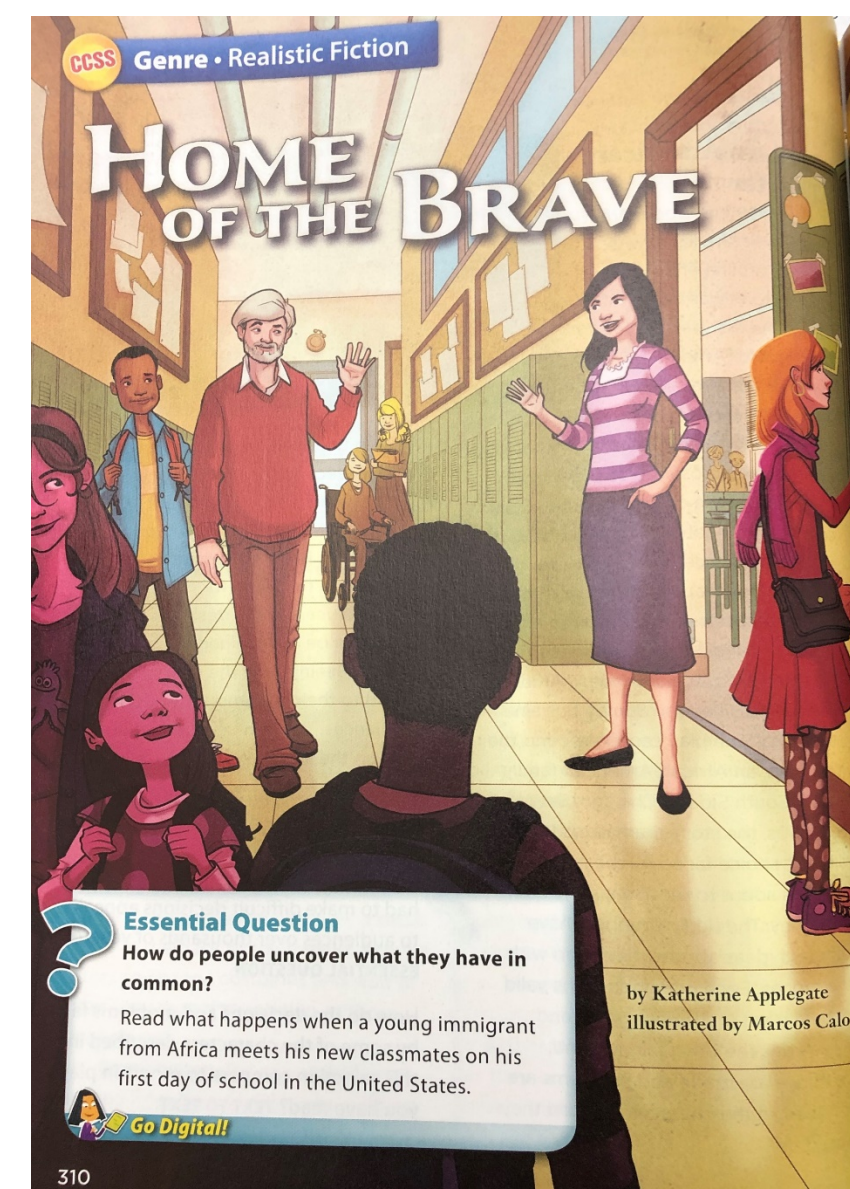
Results



“Little Blog on the Prairie” by Cathleen Davitt Bell

Stage: Surface Stage
Excerpt: “Imagine for a moment that the year is 1890. No indoor plumbing. No refrigerators. No electricity, period!”

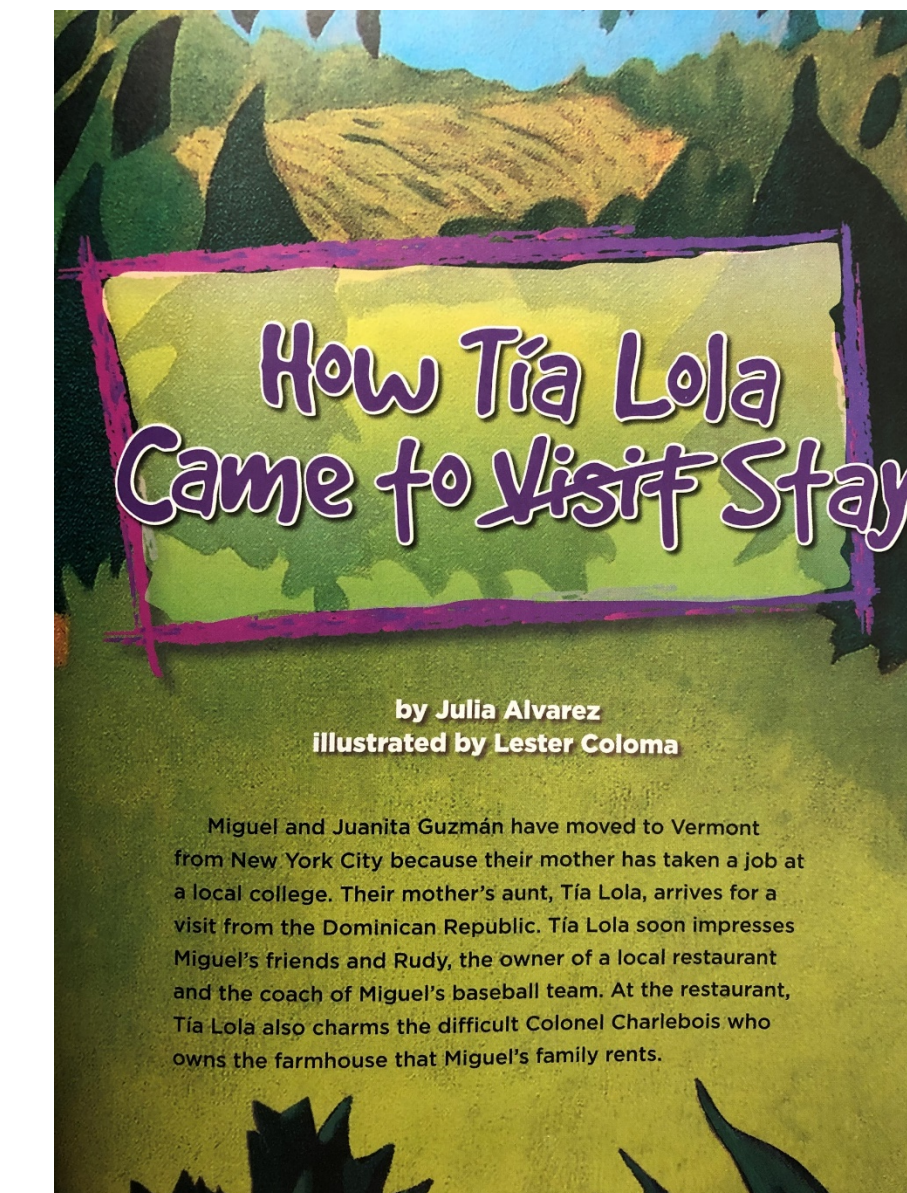
- Caters only to white students' perspective
- Does not consider or address the historical significance race, gender, or ethnicity would play in the story



“Home of the Brave” by Katherine Applegate

Stage: Surface Stage
Excerpt: “I’m used to not understanding, I say. It’s like playing a game with no rules.”

- Perpetuates stereotypes regarding Africa/Africans
- Has the point of view of a black immigrant student but was written by a white American woman.
- Trivializes the experiences English Language Learners go through



“How Tia Lola came to Visit Stay” by Julia Alvarez.

Stage: Structural Stage
Excerpt: “Don’t the colors remind her of the island? ‘La casita de tu ninez.’”

- Has the point of view of Latinx immigrant written by a Latina immigrant.
- Presents authentic dialogue in the characters native language, relying on context clues for understanding rather than the explanatory comma.
- Sheds light on a positive experience of immigration without focusing on assimilation.

Conclusions- From the results, it shows that this basal reading program is not inherently anti-racist. At first look these stories seem progressive and diverse but after taking a closer look, only one story was categorized as a structural stage story. The story that received this categorization did so because its' positive attributes stem from having a diverse author to tell a minority perspective to a wider audience. Therefore I can make the assumption that using more diverse authors will bring different perspective to basal reading programs.

References-

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- Lee, E. (2009). Taking multicultural and anti-racist education seriously: An interview with Enid Lee in Au. E. (Ed.), *Rethinking Multicultural Education: Teaching for racial and cultural justice* (pp. 9-15). Milwaukee: Rethinking Schools.