

Using Windows, Mirrors and Sliding Glass Doors to Improve English in Multiethnic Australian Classrooms

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Abstract: *Mirrors, windows and sliding glass doors, are long established literary devices that welcome experience and accordingly, enhance enjoyment, agency, and learning. Mirrors are stories that validate the experiences of new entrants to unfamiliar cultures, windows grant a view into the other cultures and sliding glass doors extend windows to provide deeper reflection. This article shows how these devices can be used in multi-ethnic classrooms and those with (EAL/D) students in Australia, in line with reader response theory, to engender engagement and therefore scaffold progress, in English mastery. Six effective texts are outlined, including The Arrival by Shaun Tan, Family, by Auntie Fay Muir and Sue Lawson, and Out, by Angela May George and finally, a user-friendly checklist is provided to help teachers establish their own libraries, in addition to the ways such texts can help develop students' reading and writing skills.*

Keywords: mirrors, windows, sliding glass doors, EAL/D, reader engagement, authentic experiences, culture, reader identity

Introduction

It is crucial for teachers to appreciate what is involved in choosing the most effective books in their classrooms, so they actively engage primary and secondary aged students, provide an appropriate challenge, and ultimately achieve ambitious teaching and learning objectives. In order to achieve this aim, they need to develop their personal knowledge of children's literature so they appreciate the range of texts that are available and what each can offer the specific children under their care. One key aspect of this appreciation is the ability to share texts in schools that reflect children's lived experience. This article focusses on how teachers can choose relevant texts that represent Australia's diverse society through metaphorical literary devices called 'mirrors', 'windows' and 'sliding glass doors', focussing on opportunities that arise in multi-ethnic classrooms and those that include children for whom English is an additional language or dialect (EAL/D). It starts by exploring these devices and unpicking why they are particularly beneficial for these environments

then, considers some examples of relevant texts and finally, creates a user-friendly checklist to help teachers choose the books for their individual classrooms.

The Australian Context

Australia is an extraordinarily multi-ethnic and polyglot nation. For example, according to the 2021 census (Australian Bureau of Statistics, n.d.), just under a third of its current population was born overseas and about a quarter use a language at home other than English. Furthermore, the EAL/D children who arrive in the country's schools come from a fantastically diverse range of cultures and backgrounds. For example, First Nation People, alone, speak more than 250 languages and 800 dialects (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, n.d.) and, in 2023, the country recognised 14,669 refugees and resettled 15,223 (Refugee Council of Australia, n.d.). Schools and classrooms that effectively share this diverse experience can benefit all their students in manifold ways, particular in relation to their understanding of English and, in particular their ability, to read. For example, it has a direct bearing on how teachers can embed the following literature content descriptions within the Australian curriculum: [to] 'Recognise that texts are created by authors who tell stories and share experiences that may be similar or different to students' (the foundation stage), 'Discuss the characters and settings of different texts and explore how language is used to present these features in different ways' (Year 2) and 'Make connections between students' own experiences and those of characters and events represented in texts drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts' (Year 6) (Australian Curriculum, n.d.).

What are Mirrors, Windows and Sliding Doors?

Mirrors, windows and sliding glass doors are long established literary devices, coined and developed by Emily Style (1988) and Rudine Sims Bishop (1990), to demonstrate how children's literature can inspire deeper engagement and understanding through its links to identity, be it aspects of race, ethnicity, culture, gender, creed, sexual orientation, or an infinite array of other personal characteristics. Mirrors are texts that reflect back to readers their own characteristics, identities, and literacies, thus showing them that 'they have been seen', i.e. valued and indeed, validated.

Books can create effective mirrors for readers in several ways, such as by depicting the communication barriers faced by characters from different countries, including incidental words and names from other languages, narrating in the first person (to aid empathy), using pictures and language that accurately represent the people, environments and cultures of their former homes and establishing narratives that help students move on. For example, the children's book *Dim Sum for Everyone* by Grace Lin (Lin, 2001), celebrates the popular Chinese tradition of eating dim sum. This is effective because children of Chinese heritage will probably quickly recognise this practice and therefore, see that their own heritage has been recognised and validated.

Conversely, windows are texts that offer students opportunities to look into the lived experience of others, be they the girl next door, the boy from Buninyong or the refugee from a war-torn country. These portals are especially effective when carefully chosen within the multi-ethnic/ EAL/D settings of Australia's contemporary classrooms as they convey valuable opportunities for both established and new Australians, to meaningfully witness each other's experience (Hunt, 2005)

and see into other worlds, cultures and situations that they may not have previously experienced (Johnson et al., 2018; Chen and Squires, 2011).

A key technique that authors can use to create such portals is depicting scenario that are fundamentally unfamiliar to readers but that still fall within their personal schemas of experience, for example, shopping in other countries or celebrating alternative religious ceremonies. Other approaches could use child characters so readers empathise, even though the experiences may be very different, and narratives that closely relate to the lives of readers, wherever they are, such as playing football or dreaming.

Finally, 'sliding glass doors', coined by Bishop (1990), are windows through which readers become so emotionally touched that they virtually enter the imaginary worlds that have been created. These can be established through techniques such as incorporating events that seem unjust (thus sparking outrage); featuring common powerful human emotions such as loneliness, love or fear; dealing with ethical dilemmas and/ or using powerful imagery, both in pictures (if included) and text. Johnson et al. (2018) recommend books that imbue characters who try to change the world for the better in some way, or in which some sort of injustice is experienced in which the characters wrestle with right and wrong and/or those that raise deep questions about the world. An example of a good sliding glass door is *I am Nefertiti*, by Annemarie Anang and Natelle Quek (Anang and Quek, 2022). This tells the story of a little girl who loses her drumming powers when her music teacher shortens her name to Nef, thereby diminishing her identity. Once her music teacher does pronounce her name correctly, Nefertiti again grows in stature. This operates as a sliding glass door, as it illustrates to readers the harm that can potentially be inflicted upon people's self-worth when their names are Anglicised, because it may be taken to imply that their identities do not matter. It achieves this aim by sharing the hurt and shame that Nefertiti experiences and therefore, encourages readers not to repeat the same error.

Links to Transactional Reading

Language education that generously embraces children's multiple literacies is perhaps, best contextualised through the literary theory of reader response (Johnson et al., 2018). One of the original proponents of this approach was Louise Rosenblatt who uses the term 'transaction' to describe the contribution made by both individual readers and the text, in creating meaning. Rosenblatt argues that readers will use their own prior experiences and emotions to derive a particular interpretation. Therefore, there can be multiple meanings attributed to each text (Rosenblatt, 1978). "The words in their particular pattern stir up elements of memory, activate areas of consciousness. The reader bringing past experience of language and the world to the task ...", (Rosenblatt, 2001, p. 268). This quote demonstrates that the words in each text, and their associated pictures, work in combination with readers' personal experiences and memories to create deep personal meaning (Martinez et al., 2017). For example, children who have moved to Australia can use books about other people's journeys to make sense of their own experiences, feelings, and emotions. Rosenblatt's theory of transactional reading also applies to texts that in some way reflect the personal experiences of readers. This is because readers can make emotional links with seemingly unfamiliar events or characters that still resonate with their own experiences and/or feelings, thus fostering empathy for the characters and cultures portrayed and therefore again, a deeper understanding of that text. As a result, this increased engagement fosters a desire to actively seek meaning from the book.

How Mirrors, Windows and Sliding Glass Doors Enhance Language Skills

Fundamentally, these devices are effective because they create greater enjoyment and engagement for readers, help them construct their own identities and co-create meaning. This then enhances their motivation to read, draw a deeper understanding and ultimately develop more sophisticated English knowledge and skills. They are especially effective in multi-ethnic classrooms that include EAL/D learners. This is because, when readers' personal literacies are welcomed and shared in simple texts, valuable information is more efficiently conveyed and gathered through chronologically straightforward plots, straightforward language, short sections of text and clear descriptions/ portrayals (Martinez et al., 2017). Mirrors are also especially valuable in multi-ethnic contexts (Style, 1988) because they draw upon the postmodern philosophy that there are multiple perspectives, not one 'true' viewpoint, as we are not all the same and do not see the same thing, so all students should have equitable opportunities to see themselves and/or their identities reflected in the texts they read. Tchida et al. (2014) further backs up this argument by stating that it is essential to share texts that operate as mirrors so that, when children see themselves in their reading matter, they feel validated, and not othered. Williams (2014), also demonstrates that such validation gives children a more meaningful personal connection to texts, and that this is essential for deep comprehension. In the words of Bishop, "When children cannot find themselves reflected in the books they read, or when the images they see are distorted, negative, or laughable, they learn a powerful lesson about how they are devalued in the society of which they are a part" (1990 p. 557).

Enriquez (2021) also shows that when children do not see themselves reflected in books, they will lose interest and lack progress in reading because they will feel that they are somehow different to those children who are depicted and may even feel embarrassed by their identity. Chen and Squires (2011) expand upon this by noting that picture books can be especially valuable mirrors for EAL/D children, as they typically depict straightforward and engaging structures and plots, a relatively small number of characters and simple settings, so readers can relatively easily pick up repeated language, new vocabulary, and grammatical features. In addition, when these books provide mirrors to readers' own cultures and experiences, they can often create emotional responses, so children will be motivated to identify the actual words and phrases that made this happen.

A central element of the power of windows is that they help readers gain a glimpse into 'worlds' that are very different to their own, thus widening their horizons and sparking their imaginations. Of course, this is the wonderful thing about books in general, in that they allow readers to escape from their own experiences. Therefore, texts can help children think differently about topics and consider wider perspectives. Indeed, in this vein, Jackson (2023), states that, in racially homogeneous communities, it is vital for students to be exposed to texts that offer windows into other cultures in order to build up knowledge, empathy, and acceptance of what they involve. Furthermore, Bishop (1990) argues that such windows are crucial for children from the majority ethnic group to understand the multi-ethnic country in which they live and the connections they share with different communities and cultures. For example, the book, *Dim Sum for Everyone* (Lin, 2001), referred to above, acts as a window for children who are unfamiliar with Chinese customs to learn about dim sum and the shared experience of eating it. Furthermore, in her research into a Scottish pre-school classroom, comprising several EAL/D children, McGilp (2014) found that EAL/D children engaged more actively when books with mirrors and windows reflected their own cultures, but also that children, across a classroom, gained a greater appreciation of its multiethnic nature.

Meanwhile, research by Farrell et al. (2010), into the responses of EAL/D learners in relation to Shaun Tan's *The Arrival*, stated that picture books can engage children who have little English in various ways, such as allowing them to create meaning from visual images, that is pertinent to their own experiences. Therefore, although these children may struggle to comprehend traditional written English texts, they can achieve a relatively deep level of understanding just through the images, thereby developing comprehension skills. They also note that the interrelationship between words and images helps to reinforce the meaning conveyed by each. Furthermore, this research found that children who are new to English make sophisticated interpretations of picture books, not only because the stories mirror their own experiences, but also because they are used to making meaning from signs and images.

However, Johnson et al. (2018) argue that caution is also necessary when choosing appropriate windows because readers may also actually turn away, disinterested, from books, if the contents are too removed from their own personal experiences. In this instance, teachers may want to consider explaining to these children why they need to open windows and embrace the differences portrayed.

The third device covered here, i.e. sliding glass doors extends the benefits of mirrors, in that they provide powerful experiences that actually change readers, as a consequence (Johnson et al., 2018). This is because, when readers become so engrossed, the stories/characters can become a temporary part of their own personal identities, thus widening their perspectives.

Creating an Effective Library

In order to develop a collection of clean mirrors, windows and sliding-doors, teachers can start with the premise that, they should not see the world through a white western European lens, as this does not reflect the contemporary Australian experience. Therefore, it is not enough to just provide children's books that are authored by people of colour and/ or feature characters, in their image. The books they choose should promote reflection on both readers' place in the world and that of wider society (Moller, 2016). This viewpoint draws heavily on the work of Bishop (2012), who argues that teachers should share a range of books that fall into one or more of four categories. These categories are that texts are consciously interracial, as this promotes a multiethnic world; incorporate characters of colour, or from a different culture to the one that is dominant; share a distinctive experience of being within particular cultural groups, so their distinctive attitudes, place customs and language at their heart and, finally; focus on coping with racism and discrimination. Furthermore, Moller makes the argument that, as one book cannot alone address all four of these criteria, it is important for classrooms to retain a diverse collection of resources that between them cumulatively addresses them all.

Building on this, teachers should be careful to select texts that offer authentic representations of characters, i.e. those that are not merely tokenistic. Otherwise, their mirrors, windows and glass-sliding doors may be too small to create a full picture or so dirty they cloud the picture altogether. Sharma Jackson's *High-Rise* mystery series potentially falls into this space, as its plot has two black sisters investigating a series of murders but crucially, their colour is not integral to the story (Jackson, 2019). In this regard, The UK's Centre of Literacy in Primary Education (CLPE) argues that it is important that characters of colour must have agency over their actions in plots and help drive the action, but that storylines should not primarily focus on their colour (CLPE, 2023).

Enriquez (2021) supports this by arguing that it is not enough for readers to see their own physical appearances reflected in texts, but also their experiences, values and cultures. In other words, it is important to normalise, not other characters' identities. Stockslager (2017) supports the findings of the CLPE, by pointing out that it is crucial that portrayals of characters from a non-white Australian background are authentic and real. Chen and Squires (2011) state that it is important that texts provided for children who are from other cultures are authentic and not oversimplified in terms of storyline, so they provoke thought from the reader. Therefore, teachers who want to diversify their book collections and use of texts, should avoid selecting any in which any characters of colour are just peripheral entities. It is important to question the message this sends to young readers. Broken mirrors and cloudy windows are not helpful.

Of course, in the Australian context of applying mirrors, windows and sliding-doors to the teaching and learning of reading, teachers also have a duty to use texts that include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander characters, and to ensure that these groups are authentically represented, i.e. they are pivotal to the plot and their true identities are depicted within the narrative.

Some Good Examples

Six examples of texts that act as effective mirrors, windows and/or glass sliding doors are outlined below. These books offer authentic representations of characters from a range of cultures as well as the challenges faced by children who have arrived in Australia as asylum seekers.

The Arrival

Tan, S. (2014). *The Arrival*, Lothian Books.

The author of this book, Shaun Tan, describes it as a 'migrant story' told solely in pictures that relates to the theme of not belonging (Tan, n.d.). It depicts a nameless man leaving his family and sailing on a ship over a vast sea to another country where he hopes he can make a better life for him and his future family. When he arrives in a new city, he finds an array of strange creatures, unfathomable languages, and strange floating objects that make him feel completely alienated. All he has with him is one suitcase but the strangers he meets are kind and help him find somewhere to live, a job and food to eat. Readers are shown that the strangers extend this welcome because, in the past, they too have found themselves in the same situation. For child readers, this acts as a mirror as it depicts the alienation that they may feel at first and the strangeness of arriving in Australia and engaging with its customs and culture. At the same time, the depiction of the man's discomfort acts as a window for readers, who have grown up in this country, as to how newly arrived migrants often feel.

Tan contends that the absence of words in this book places the reader more firmly in the shoes of the man at the centre of this text in that, they must make their own narrative from the pictures and, as a result, spend time looking at the depicted details to ignite both their imaginations and empathy in order to relate to the immigrant character. This book therefore acts as a very effective view into the lives and feelings of those newly arrived in this country. A particularly pertinent quote from Tan is:

"One of the greatest powers of storytelling is that it invites us to walk in other people's shoes for a while, but perhaps even more importantly, it invites us to contemplate our own shoes also." (Tan, n.d., para 18.).

This quote succinctly captures the power of windows and mirrors within language education and how texts can simultaneously act as both. Indeed, there is also an argument that this book also acts as a sliding door because, for at least a brief moment, it's lack of words forces readers to put themselves in the same situation as the wanderer and therefore witness the same experiences.

One specific example from *The Arrival* that illustrates how this book operates as mirror, window and sliding glass door is found on a page near the beginning of the book in which there are a series of pictures showing the man being prodded and examined during some sort of medical. This scene acts as a mirror for the majority of immigrants who have had to endure this process, thus providing a window into how the process of immigration works for those who have not gone through it and indeed, a sliding door, because readers can readily share the outrage and shame this may cause.

The Name

Jar Choi, Y. (2001). *The Name Jar*, Dragonfly Books

This book centres around a little girl called Unhei, who has emigrated to the USA from Korea. Initially, children make fun of her name because it sounds different. As a result, the new immigrant is reluctant to share what she is called with her new classmates. This acts as a mirror to all those children who have moved to a new country where the people have struggled to say their names or, in some other way, made them feel different. It can also act as a window in respect of how strange a new country can feel to new arrivals. The text depicts Unhei going shopping with her mother. The shops initially look very unfamiliar but then, they reach the Korean supermarket, where they buy the ingredients for Kimchi. At this point, the young girl starts to feel more at home as she recognises there are some similarities between her original and adopted countries. Again, this will act as a mirror to some readers who also seek solace in finding the familiar in an unfamiliar place. The next day at school, Unhei finds a glass jar containing some names and is allowed to choose a different one for each day she is present. However, deep down, the little girl still feels uncomfortable. The proprietor of the Korean store she visited, at the beginning of the story, advises her to embrace her Korean name and indeed, to teach her classmates and teacher how it should be pronounced. When Unhei arrives at school the next day, the glass jar is no longer there and, inspired by Mr Kim, she writes her name on the board using both the English and Korean scripts. Her teacher and classmates realise their error and now start to refer to Unhei with her correct name. As Unhei has suffered an injustice through the attempt to give her a western sounding name, this can resonate with some readers and act as a sliding glass door moment. Also, readers may resolve that others should not have their identity tampered in this way and instead respect people's given names.

I'm Australian Too

Fox, M. (2017). *I'm Australian Too*, Scholastic Books.

This book was shortlisted for The Children's Book of the Year Awards, by the Children's Book Council of Australia and is a celebration of Australia's multiethnic heritage. Fundamentally, it illustrates how people have come to all corners of Australia from all over the world, including young asylum seekers and. At the end of the book, there is a poignant reference to a child held in a refugee detention centre who is hoping that their claim to asylum will be upheld. Its main theme is that everyone who lives in Australia should be able to call themselves Australian, whether or not this was their original home.

Therefore, this book again acts as a mirror for anyone who has moved to Australia from another

country to make it their home and who celebrates the things that make it such a great place to live. It also acts as a window for those children who were born here, or came from yet another place, as they can see how many different nationalities make up the country and that they all have just as much validity. One example from this book that illustrates this can be found on the page where a young boy whose family originated from Vietnam, but who now live in Melbourne, speaks directly to the reader saying that he is just as Australian as them because of his Australian accent. This can operate as a mirror because readers with similar backgrounds may feel more like they belong. It also acts as a window to the fact that whilst children may not look like typical white Australians, they may have grown up in the same country and may share the same accent.

Family

Muir, M. and Lawson, S. (2020). *Family*, Magabala Books.

This beautiful picture book acts as a mirror for First Nations' people by celebrating the concept of family through the depiction of common childhood experiences, such as playing footy and joining in with yarning circles. Through this portrayal, it demonstrates the importance of stories and song as well as the role country plays in their lives. This is an authentic text in the sense it has been written by an elder and the illustrations depict the red earth and the people in realistic ways. It reinforces the identity of First Nation readers and instils a sense of pride. Plus, it also operates as a window for those children not familiar with Aboriginal culture. For example, this book can act as a window as it demonstrates to non-First Nations peoples the importance that elders play in their community and the respect that they should be accorded.

My Two Blankets

Kohard, I. and Blackwood, F. (2014). Little Hare Books.

This book won The Children's Book of the Year Awards by the Children's Book Council of Australia and is a story told from the perspective of a young asylum seeker. It depicts the strangeness of arriving in a new nation by highlighting the fact that everyone speaks a different language and how this makes the narrator feel different and alone. This is an emotion that many newly arrived immigrants will recognise, so the book provides a keen insight for readers who have always lived in the same country.

In this instance, the author creates an effective mirror, by linking the experiences of a girl, who is new to Australia, to an old blanket that she brought with her, from overseas. At first, the new immigrant finds comfort by wrapping herself in the blanket (which acts as a metaphor for her old life, language, and culture) but, as time goes by, she reaches out to others, only to return to the blanket when her lack of communication skills reinforces her isolation. At this point, her friend drip-feeds her more and more words for her to use, on pieces of paper wrapped up as origami representations of birds, so the girl gradually acquires the language skills she needs. Consequently, she finds that this new 'blanket' (that is a linked metaphor for her adopted country, language, and culture) also becomes increasingly comfortable, so she now has recourse to two separate blankets in order to feel at home.

Thus, these blanket metaphors are used by the author to represent the frustration and isolation immigrants may feel when they cannot communicate and the corresponding feelings of safety and inclusion that can flow from enhancing their new Australian language skills. But they also demonstrate how it is quite natural for readers to find difficulties in communication to be so scary that

they are tempted to run off and hide. These are common feelings for immigrants and therefore, the children who read his book are likely to feel reassured that they are very much not alone and therefore better able to contextualise their feelings and indeed, reach out and say hello. The book also acts as a window for those readers who have not gone through this experience as it allows them to understand the anguish of those who have. Furthermore, *My two blankets* also has the potential to act as a sliding glass door as it can draw readers into the girl's world to such an extent that they can clearly imagine the distress and frustration that she feels. In this way, they would not only become more connected to the English language but may also be prompted to become more welcoming of new arrivals to this country and make a conscious effort to make them feel at home.

Out

George, A.M. (2016). *Out*, Scholastic.

This book was also shortlisted for The Children's Book of the Year Awards by the Children's Book Council of Australia and was winner of the 2017 Australian Family Therapists' Award for Children's Literature. The main character is an asylum seeker who has escaped from a war in her home country, on a boat. The story begins with a girl feeling that the people on the street are always staring at her because they see her as being different and this is reinforced when they describe her as an 'asylum seeker'. She recounts the ordeal of her journey by sea to Australia and demonstrates how loud noises still give her flashbacks to the horrors she experienced. However, it is ultimately a very positive tale as it shows there is hope having left a war-torn country or an oppressive regime, as it demonstrates how the girl and her mother gradually learn English, finally dance and are reunited with their partner/father. This can act as a mirror to those readers who have also sought asylum in Australia but in addition it is a powerful window into the ordeals many asylum seekers must face when fleeing their home countries where they are no longer safe. This gives the reader both understanding and empathy to their situation which will hopefully build up tolerance.

These are again, experiences that many asylum seekers endure and so the book has a strong potential to validate the emotions and prejudice that many readers will have faced. Its illustrations are also particularly poignant and create a powerful impact on readers, acting as a window into the harsh conditions those seeking refuge must endure. Furthermore, the reference to the effects of loud noises (the focal character in the book hides under a table when she hears sudden loud noises as it reminds her of the shooting and bombs, she experienced in her home country), also gives other readers, who haven't lived through similar experiences, a window into why asylum seekers may have extreme reactions to certain experiences and stimuli.

A Checklist for Teachers

The checklist below is provided to help individual educators choose texts for their classrooms/schools that effectively use mirrors, windows and/or sliding glass doors, in relation to multi-ethnic environments and contexts including EAL/D learners, in order to enhance English language knowledge and skills. This is certainly not an exhaustive list; particularly as new books continue to find new ways to achieve this aim, but it should provide a sound rubric. Also, please note that, of course, not all the following criteria need to be present in any one text.

A checklist for choosing effective mirrors, windows and sliding glass doors, to support students in multi-ethnic and EAL/D settings

Mirrors and windows

Does the resource feature:

- cultures of the specific children being taught?
- authentic representations of characters and their wider lives (i.e. not stereotypical)?
- non-majority characters that play a pivotal part in the plot?
- positive representations of non-majority characters?
- normalised non-majority characters and their cultures?
- characters who experience problems when trying to communicate with speakers of the majority language?
- real names and words/phrases from the cultures represented?
- first person narration (in order to build empathy for the characters involved)?
- images that accurately reflect characters, their homes, families and environment?
- unfamiliar scenarios, such as festivals, that have equivalents in Australia?

Sliding glass doors

Does the resource feature:

- provoking story lines that encourage reflection on society and the importance of inclusion?
- unjust incidents?
- deep human emotions such as love, fear or loneliness?
- ethical dilemmas, such as wrestling between right and wrong?
- characters who are trying to change things for the better?

How can Windows, Mirrors and Sliding Glass Doors Help to Improve English in Multiethnic Australian Classrooms?

In addition to setting out the criteria to consider when selecting texts that have the potential to act as a mirror, window and/or a sliding glass door, it is important to discuss how these texts can be used to improve students' attainment in English within the classroom. If a text acts as a mirror, then those students who can see aspects of their identity or experiences reflected in the book will more readily connect to a character and/or situation that resonates with an aspect of their life. As a result, they will engage at a deeper level with the text and will actively seek meaning from that text. They will be more able to form a rich situation model or mental model of the text. Kintsch (1988) explains that a reader will construct a situation model of what the text is about, including a rich visual representation of the characters, the setting, and the plot. Quigley, (2020) further explains that those children who display metacognitive behaviours while reading such as monitoring their understanding of a text as they read, updating their situation model, and questioning what they do not understand, are far more likely to achieve a deeper level of understanding of what they have read. In such circumstances, as the student is actively seeking meaning, they are also more likely to investigate new vocabulary or engage with the grammatical features of the text which can impact meaning. This can clearly help those students who are developing their English skills.

One of the factors that helps readers comprehend a text on a deep level is having the necessary background knowledge to understand that text. A text which acts as a mirror means that the reader

shares similar experiences as the characters in that text. Therefore, they are more able to bring that knowledge of a particular culture or experience to understand more fully the events in the story. Chambers (2018) explains that this knowledge may include a reader's personal experiences, emotions, and more general knowledge. Similarly, a book that acts as a window into another culture or event will transmit this knowledge to the reader and provide them with the background knowledge that they need to comprehend the text. This background knowledge is a key factor in the reader being able to make inferences as they read. Elbro and Bach-Iversen (2013) state that texts require the reader to use their background knowledge and experience to develop their understanding of what they read. In developing their understanding, the reader must make the required inferences to make sense of what they read. However, there will be times when the reader does not have the required background knowledge to make an inference which is needed to fully understand what they have read. This point is key to Hirsch's argument (2003) that background knowledge is fundamental to developing a deep understanding of a text. A teacher who is using a text in the classroom can therefore explicitly model how the background knowledge contained within that text can help the reader infer information that will help that text make sense to the reader.

In terms of writing skills, texts which act as a mirror to certain students can help bring a more in-depth understanding of that text's characters when writing. For example, if writing a diary entry from the perspective of a particular character then the student is more likely to empathise with that character and as a result infer how that character is feeling and why they have acted in a certain way. Those students are more likely to include richer descriptions in their writing and select more precise vocabulary to articulate their thoughts. In addition, using a text which operates as a mirror, will mean that students have more cognitive space to focus on the grammatical elements of writing as well as spelling as they have a good grasp of the text's content and so have the necessary knowledge to communicate this in their writing freeing up their brain to think about the more technical aspects of writing. This is particularly beneficial to EAL/D students. Texts which operate as a sliding glass door allow the reader to enter the world of the text. This can be very powerful in terms of writing. One option open to the teacher is to halt the reading at a pivotal point in the text and allow the students to free write their response. This is when students write in the moment with no constraints in terms of spelling, punctuation, and grammatical features. The benefit of free writing is that it allows students to draw on their imagination in an uninhibited way, students are motivated to write. After the free write, the students will go back and revise their writing, adding in age-related punctuation and grammatical features as well as checking their spelling. These are just a couple of ways in which using texts which operate mirrors, windows and sliding glass doors can enhance the teaching of English.

Summary

As can be seen by Style's (1988) and Bishop's (1990) metaphors of literature acting as mirrors, windows and in some cases sliding doors, children's literature has the potential to give multi-ethnic and EAL/D learners in Australian schools a sense of validation as well as allowing other children to develop a sense of empathy for those who have come to these shores. These texts can be powerful tools of engagement and as a result, motivate children to want to read, which in turn improves their ability to speak, read and write in English. However, it is important that teachers evaluate the texts they select to ensure they are authentic and multilayered. Some good examples

of appropriate texts are outlined above for teachers to consider when they are building up their classroom's resources along with a user-friendly checklist on how to choose appropriate titles. It is very much hoped that these insights help schools take advantage of the country's diverse and cosmopolitan society.

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