

Literary Explorations: Tolerance

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Introduction

I chose to develop a literary unit on the concept of “tolerance” because it encompasses all the values, dispositions and lessons we, as teachers, want to pass on to our students: diversity, acceptance, respect, peace, perspective-taking, understanding.

Some people oppose the use of the term “tolerance” because being tolerant, or to tolerate, connotes putting up with something, allowing something with which you don’t necessarily agree, making an exception and permitting the differences. It gives power to the mainstream—the majority—to choose to allow something outside the norm.

While I understand that side of the argument, I instead view tolerance as the polar opposite of intolerance, and intolerance to me is discrimination, prejudice, egocentrism, hate and ignorance. Therefore, I choose to use the definition of tolerance that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) set forth in 1995, and which has been endorsed by the Southern Poverty Law Center and its Teaching Tolerance project. Because of its poignant message and relevancy to my project, I must include the entire passage:

“Article 1 - Meaning of tolerance

- 1.1 Tolerance is respect, acceptance and appreciation of the rich diversity of our world’s cultures, our forms of expression and ways of being human. It is fostered by knowledge, openness, communication, and freedom of thought, conscience and belief. Tolerance is harmony in difference. It is not only a moral duty, it is also a political and legal requirement. Tolerance, the virtue that makes peace possible, contributes to the replacement of the culture of war by a culture of peace.
- 1.2 Tolerance is not concession, condescension or indulgence. Tolerance is, above all, an active attitude prompted by recognition of the universal human rights and fundamental freedoms of others. In no circumstance can it be used to justify infringements of these fundamental values. Tolerance is to be exercised by individuals, groups and States.

- 1.3 Tolerance is the responsibility that upholds human rights, pluralism (including cultural pluralism), democracy and the rule of law. It involves the rejection of dogmatism and absolutism and affirms the standards set out in international human rights instruments.
- 1.4 Consistent with respect for human rights, the practice of tolerance does not mean toleration of social injustice or the abandonment or weakening of one's convictions. It means that one is free to adhere to one's own convictions and accepts that others adhere to theirs. It means accepting the fact that human beings, naturally diverse in their appearance, situation, speech, behaviour and values, have the right to live in peace and to be as they are. It also means that one's views are not to be imposed on others" (UNESCO, 1995, pp. 203).

In teaching tolerance, it seems appropriate to use this definition, albeit more condensed for younger students, in order for our students to understand the full context of its meaning and its implications in a global setting. Tolerance is a vital concept to teach because it sets the foundation from which our students can build a culture of peace, open-mindedness, equity and equality.

It may seem quite obvious, but the concept of tolerance can be incorporated into any grade level, and should be introduced to students as soon as possible and continue until graduation. Teaching tolerance goes hand in hand with multiculturalism and providing diverse perspectives in the classroom. For this project, I chose to develop the unit for the fourth grade. For more than any other reason, it is because their reading abilities are progressing; they are able to read on their own while also enjoying read alouds. They are developing their sense of the world outside home and school and it is an apt opportunity to delve deeper into issues related to historical inequality, stereotypes and tolerance.

In regards to the objectives for this unit, my primary anticipated goal is that students will be introduced and exposed to a variety of books that deal with tolerance in some form, whether explicitly or not. Because diverse characters, diverse worlds, diverse perspectives and diverse

ideas are available to students through the unit materials, they will connect with what is comfortable and familiar while also learning about people, places, events and issues that provide thought-provoking experiences and the desire for further investigation. As we've discussed in class and is stressed in Hancock (2004), the ultimate goal is for students to be lifetime readers instead of just school-time readers. In addition, my dream goal is for students to understand the history of intolerance in order to keep their minds open, consider the perspectives of others and work towards peace and understanding.

Title: *Celebrate America in Poetry and Art*

Author: Nora Panzer (ed.)		Illustrator: n/a
Copyright Date: 1994	Publisher: New York: Hyperion Books for Children	
Genre: poetry collection	Grade level: 4+	Delivery Format: independent read

Connection to Theme:

In order to appreciate the diversity that surrounds us, we must introduce our students to multiple perspectives, such as the varying voices that can be displayed through poetry and art. This diverse collection supports the opportunity for students to connect with the pairing of art and language, and the interpretation of both.

Guiding Questions:

- How do you think the artwork and the poems were paired up?
- Was there a particular image that you connected with? Was there a particular poem?
- How do the images and poems celebrate America?
- What do we learn about America from this collection?

Writing Experience:

This collection of poetry and artwork was published in 1994, almost 15 years ago. Imagine you have been asked to write a poem celebrating America for the next edition. Create a poem and list some possible images you think could be paired up with your poem.

Title: *The Crayon Box that Talked*

Author: Shane DeRolf		Illustrator: Michael Letzig
Copyright Date: 1997	Publisher: New York: Random House	
Genre: poetry, fantasy	Grade level: K-2	Delivery Format: read aloud

Connection to Theme:

The crayons don't think they like each other until they need to work together to complete a picture. The poem illustrates the mistake we make when we judge others before we know them. There is also the message that as unique individuals, we all have different roles to play; we must therefore respect and appreciate each other.

Guiding Questions:

- Give an example of how you had judged someone before you got to know them.
- What different roles (jobs) do we have in our classroom? How do we help each other?
- What would happen if we were all good at just one thing?
- Imagine opening up a box of crayons to find no red crayon. Or, what if the crayons were all one color? Why do we need a box filled with different colored crayons?

Writing Experience:

Imagine you are a crayon. Describe yourself and your role in the crayon box. What color are you? What makes you unique? How do you work with others to make a complete picture?

Title: *The Devil's Arithmetic*

Author: Jane Yolen	Illustrator: n/a
Copyright Date: 1988	Publisher: New York: Viking Kestral
Genre: science fiction	Grade level: 6
	Delivery Format: read aloud

Connection to Theme:

The Holocaust is one of the most horrific examples of intolerance in human history; in studying these events, we need to teach our students what intolerance can lead to, and how we must learn from our mistakes to stop the intolerance occurring in today's world. In this story, Hannah doesn't appreciate her Jewish heritage until she travels back in time to experience Nazi-occupied Poland and encounters the horrors that so many faced.

Guiding Questions:

- What traditions does your family have? In what ways are our traditions similar? In what ways are they different?
- What are your thoughts when a family member tells you about your heritage, about your family's past (i.e. where your family came from)?
- Once Hannah travels back to 1942, she warns the people about the Nazis. She tells them that 6 million Jews will be killed but they think is just a little girl telling fairy tales. How must Hannah be feeling? How must it feel to not be able to stop something?
- How does Hannah's time in the past change her?
- Why must we remember terrible events that have happened in the past?

Writing Experience:

Hannah's life changed considerably after her experience in the concentration camp. What did this book do for you? You may react to the entire book, or one part of it; write a review or your opinion of what you learned. Describe the lessons you learned or the follow-up questions you have.

Title: *Different Just Like Me*

Author: Lori Mitchell		Illustrator: Lori Mitchell
Copyright Date: 1999	Publisher: Watertown, MA: Talewinds	
Genre: realistic fiction	Grade level: K-3	Delivery Format: read aloud

Connection to Theme:

In teaching tolerance, we must emphasize that “different” is not bad. As the young narrator April spends a week observing people who are different but also similar to her, the underlying message is that although people are different, we are very much alike. The book includes the ASL alphabet as well the numbers 1-5 in Braille, which can lead to a discussion about differences in communicating, not just differences in skin color.

Guiding Questions:

- What is meant by “different just like me?”
- How can we be different but alike?
- Read the author’s note about why she wrote this book—what do you think?
- Do any of the pictures remind you of people you’ve met?
- Can you hypothesize why April compares people to flowers in Grammie’s garden?

Writing Experience:

During this week, keep a list of places you go where you see people who may act or look different than you, but who are doing the same thing as you. How are you different and how are you alike? We will work together as a class to create our own “Different Just Like Me” book.

Title: *Don't Laugh At Me*

Author: Steve Seskin & Allen Shamblin	Illustrator: Glin Dibley
Copyright Date: 2002	Publisher: Berkeley, CA: Tricycle Press
Genre: song lyrics	Grade level: K-3
	Delivery Format: read aloud

Connection to Theme:

For EDU 501, I observed a first-grade class in Gales Ferry and the students knew the lyrics to this song by heart. The teacher turned the pages of the book while the accompanying music played. It was actually quite touching because they put so much emotion into their singing. Although the lyrics do contain the words "God" and "perfect wings," the lyrics and illustrations provide an engaging lesson in tolerance and anti-bullying.

Guiding Questions:

- Why do people tease each other, call each other names, laugh at people who look, talk or act differently?
- What feelings or emotions are reflected in the illustrations?
- How does this book relate to bullying?
- What experiences have you had with bullies?

Writing Experience:

Step into the shoes of a character in this book and write an entry which describes a school day. Think of the emotions they're feeling when classmates laugh at them, ignore them or tease them.

Title: *How It Feels to Have a Gay or Lesbian Parent*

Author: Judith E. Snow	Illustrator: n/a
Copyright Date: 2004	Publisher: Binghamton, NY: Harrington Park Press
Genre: essay	Grade level: 5 Delivery Format: Small group

Connection to Theme:

This is a collection of essays written by children who have gay or lesbian parents. Each essay describes how the child found out about his/her parent's sexual orientation, how they feel about it, and how their friends and classmates treat them. There are 32 essays but I would choose to share the eight essays that are written by children between the ages of 7 and 12. It is quite possible that this text could be controversial, but as part of creating a tolerant community (even if no students in my class have gay or lesbian parents), children need to be aware of the diversity of families and listen to the perspectives of others.

Guiding Questions:

- Describe an "Aha!" moment while you were reading the essay.
- If Keila, Trisha, Taylor/Justin, Angel, Miranda/Lilly/Avery, Ally, Alanna or Chloe were in our class, would you treat them differently than their classmates do? Would you be his/her friend?
- How are these families different or similar to yours?
- What questions do you have after reading the essay? How can we find answers to those questions?

Writing Experience:

Write a letter to Keila, Trisha, Taylor/Justin, Angel, Miranda/Lilly/Avery, Ally, Alanna or Chloe (whosever essay you read). You may want to ask them questions or tell them what you thought of their essay. You may want to tell them about your family or give them some advice or encouragement.

Title: *If the World Were a Village*

Author: David J. Smith	Illustrator: Shelagh Armstrong
Copyright Date: 2002	Publisher: Tonawanda, NY: Kids Can Press Ltd.
Genre: reference	Grade level: 3-5
	Delivery Format: pair reading

Connection to Theme:

It is difficult even for adults to conceive how large the world really is and how the United States is just one country among hundreds. In teaching tolerance to our students, we need to illuminate the fact that although the world is massive, we are all connected--“it’s a small world after all.” This book helps to put things into perspective.

Guiding Questions:

Each pair will read one page by themselves and then read their page out loud to the class.

Before each page:

- What are your predictions (i.e. how many out of 100 live in Asia, Africa?)

After each page is presented, the following could be asked:

- What is your reaction to this information?
- What was the most surprising piece of information from this page?

After completion of book:

- What might happen if the village exceeds 250 people?
- What can we do for the villagers who don’t have enough food or who can’t go to school?

Writing Experience:

Describe how your life would be different if . . . (choose one)

1. you lived in China.
2. you were 60 years old.
3. you did not have enough food to eat every day.
4. you breathed polluted air.
5. you could not attend school.
6. you lived on less than \$1.00 a day.
7. you did not have electricity.

Title: *I Will Be Your Friend: Songs and Activities for Young Peacemakers*

Author: Teaching Tolerance	Illustrator: n/a
Copyright Date: 2003	Publisher: Montgomery, AL: Southern Poverty Law Center
Genre: song lyrics	Grade level: 4
	Delivery Format: small group read

Connection to Theme:

Another great resource from Teaching Tolerance, this book of song lyrics and accompanying CD includes songs about diversity, friendship, acceptance and helping others. Although not a traditional book, I think students could read along while the music is playing and then respond. There are nine songs that I believe are appropriate for the third grade and that have diverse voices and styles to which the students can connect, discuss in groups, and respond.

Guiding Questions:

- What was your first impression of the song?
- What was the message of the song you heard?
- How do these songs relate to peace?
- How else can children spread peace?

Writing Experience:

Track 1-Something for Me, Something for You
 Track 3-1492
 Track 6-Courage
 Track 7-What Can One Little Person Do?
 Track 11-All Work Together
 Track 13-It Could Be a Wonderful World
 Track 15-Walkin' on My Wheels
 Track 25-Freedom, Oh Freedom
 Track 26-What a Wonderful World

After your group listens to one of the above songs while reading its lyrics, discuss together what you liked and disliked about the song. Then, you may work together, in pairs or alone to create lyrics to your own song.

Title: A Life Like Mine

Collaboration of Dorling Kindersley and UNICEF		
Copyright Date: 2002	Publisher: New York: DK Publishing, Inc.	
Genre: survey	Grade level: 4	Delivery Format: individual

Connection to Theme:

Part of teaching tolerance is making students feel like they are part of the global community, linked with people all over the world. As we expose students to the various cultures in the world and encourage them to connect with other children, they will become more engaged with the issues and events occurring beyond their home and school life. To understand that we are all different but we are all somehow alike is essential to teach tolerance.

Guiding Questions:

- As you preview this book, what catches your attention? What surprises you? What is familiar to you? What is unfamiliar?
- How all the children's lives different? How are their lives similar?
- How would your life be different if you lived in Afghanistan? China? South Africa? Colombia?
- The following statements are found in this book. Why do you think the authors included them?
 Every child: should have water
 has the right to education
 needs love and care
 has the right to an identity

Writing Experience:

You may choose one of the following writing assignments:

1. Create a page of this book about yourself.
2. Step into the shoes of one of the children featured in the book and describe a day in their life.
3. Describe how all children of the world are different but alike.

Title: *More Than a Label*

Author: Aisha Muharrar		Illustrator: n/a
Copyright Date: 2002	Publisher: Minneapolis, MN: Free Sprit Publishing	
Genre: non-fiction	Grade level: teen	Delivery Format: independent read

Connection to Theme:

Labeling people goes hand in hand with prejudice, discrimination and stereotyping, which all fall under intolerance. In order to teach children how damaging intolerance is, we need to delve into these topics and discuss how labeling occurs, how hate words are used and how stereotypes are formed. We need to teach understanding, not ignorance, respect, not bigotry. This book deals with a lot of teen issues and sections may not be appropriate for fourth-graders but the final three chapters touch upon racial slurs, hate words and intolerance.

Guiding Questions:

- Page 95 features three sides to a debate about slurs and hateful words. Who do you agree with and why?
- Can you think of an example to illustrate how harmful a slur can be?
- Tell us more about a time that you were labeled or called a slur. How did it make you feel?
- What can you do to stop the labeling of others, calling each other harmful names and believing in stereotypes?

Writing Experience:

On pages 112-113, there is an activity to discover what makes you unique. You may use this list as a starting point, but you do not need to answer every question and you may add other information. Instead of writing in the first-person, though, you will be a newspaper reporter writing an article about this really cool person in the community—you! First, think about what makes you unique and then look at yourself from another person's perspective.

Title: A Pig is Moving In!

Author: Claudia Fries		Illustrator: Claudia Fries
Copyright Date: 2000	Publisher: New York: Orchard Books	
Genre: fantasy	Grade level: K-2	Delivery Format: small group

Connection to Theme:

An aspect of tolerance is keeping an open mind. When the animals see a pig moving into the apartment building, they make assumptions about his cleanliness before meeting him. In the end, they realize they were mistaken to judge him so quickly and harshly; a simple but effective lesson in prejudice.

Guiding Questions:

- What is the big idea in this story?
- Why do the other animals think the pig is messy? What assumptions are being made?
- What might have happened if the animals had introduced themselves to Theodore sooner?
- Hypothesize what the term “prejudiced” means.

Writing Experience:

Step into the hoofs of Theodore the Pig. You have just moved into a new apartment. You see your neighbors around the building but they won't say hello. How are you feeling? What are your thoughts about this new apartment building?

Title: *A Place at the Table*

Author: Southern Poverty Law Center	Illustrator: n/a
Copyright Date: 2000	Publisher: Montgomery, AL: Southern Poverty Law Center
Genre: survey	Grade level: 6-8
	Delivery Format: Pair read

Connection to Theme:

Although this text accompanies the film of the same name, the two do not cover the same material. This survey book on the “struggles for equality in America” would be too arduous for a third grader to read in its entirety, but I envision assigning one chapter per two students. Within each chapter there are shorter passages and features which could be assigned to struggling readers.

Guiding Questions:

- Summarize what your reading selection was about for the class.
- Why do you think this occurred?
- What in the reading surprised you/shocked you?
- What would you have done if you had been in that situation?
- Do you think inequalities still happen today? Why?

Writing Experience:

As you and your partner read the selection, what questions do you have? Write those down in your journal. Once you finish the selection, were any of those questions answered? Describe what you don’t understand or what confused you—the unanswered questions.

Title: *Rhinos & Raspberries*

Foreword By: Lois Lowry	Illustrators: Leo Acadia, Nina Frenkel, Noah Woods	
Copyright Date: 2006	Publisher: Montgomery, AL: Teaching Tolerance	
Genre: traditional literature	Grade level: PK-6	Delivery Format: pair read

Connection to Theme:

Rhinos & Raspberries includes 12 short stories related to tolerance from around the world. If each student pairing read one story, responded to it and then shared with the class, we would examine tolerance from multiple perspectives and the students would be active participants in their learning.

Guiding Questions:

- What is the big idea in the story you and your partner read?
- What did your partner think of the story? How did his/her opinion differ from what you thought of the story?
- Which characters in your stories were good friends, good listeners, kind speakers, considerate of others and/or helpful individuals?
- What piece of advice would you give to the characters who made mistakes or who were not thoughtful?
- How do you think you would have acted if you had been in that situation?

Writing Experience:

Inspired by Lesson 2.2 (Poetry & Tolerance) in teachers' edition of *Rhinos & Raspberries*, 2006, p. 70-71.

With their partners, students will retell their tolerance tale in poetry form. The lesson in the above resource provides two types of poetry patterns (Parts of Speech and Story Triangle), each consisting of five lines, but while the students could use either of those patterns, they would also be encouraged to retell the story in any type of poetry form they wish: limerick, haiku, free verse, etc.

Title: *Samir and Yonatan*

Author: Daniella Carmi		Translated in 2000 by Yael Lotan	
Copyright Date: 1994		Publisher: New York: Arthur A. Levine Books	
Genre: realistic fiction	Grade level: 5	Delivery Format: read aloud	

Connection to Theme:

In looking beyond what occurs in the United States, this book could be used to introduce students to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Instead of delving into all the issues which would be too overwhelming for fourth graders, this book's message supports the idea that two people who would never consider being friends become friends, and they are the better for it.

Guiding Questions:

- Before we begin reading, what do we know about Israel and Palestine?
- How would you describe Samir's first impression of Yonatan?
- How would you describe Yonatan's first impression of Samir?
- What assumptions are they both making?
- What do they learn about each other as the story progresses?

Writing Experience:

Step into the shoes of either Samir or Yanatan. What did you learn from the other? How will you remember the other? How will your life change after befriending the other?

Title: *Shades of Black*

Author: Sandra L. Pinkney		Photographs by: Myles C. Pinkney
Copyright Date: 2000	Publisher: New York: Scholastic	
Genre: concept book	Grade level: 2-3	Delivery Format: read aloud, followed by group review

Connection to Theme:

The color of one's skin is often the first thing we notice, especially if it is not the same color as our own. We all have some hidden prejudices and/or engrained bias due to our culture, the media and the fear of the unknown. Instead of trying to create a "color-blind" world, it seems more appropriate to recognize and celebrate all the color variations that exist in our world.

Shades of Black would be supplemented with *All the Colors We Are* (Kissinger, 1994) and *All the Colors of the Earth* (Hamanaka, 1994) for the group project.

Guiding Questions:

- How are these children unique?
- Do you agree that we are all unique? What makes us unique?
- Why do you think skin color was compared to food?
- Which photographs did you connect with? Why?

Writing Experience:

Within your group, you will be exploring various books about skin colors. Help each other to choose a food item, object in nature or even crayon color that describes you in some way (whether your skin, your hair, your eyes, your nose, your freckles, or your entire self).

Complete the following sentence:

I am unique because am/is/are the color of .

You may then choose to describe this color, and yourself, in words or images or both.
What else makes you unique?

Title: *The Sissy Duckling*

Author: Harvey Fierstein		Illustrator: Henry Cole
Copyright Date: 2002	Publisher: New York: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers	
Genre: fiction	Grade level: K-3	Delivery Format: independent read

Connection to Theme:

Loosely based on Hans Christian Andersen's "The Ugly Duckling," this story is about Elmer the duckling who is happy with whom he is, but whose father calls him a "sissy" because he doesn't play sports. Elmer begins to question why he is so different from the other ducks. Along with a few other variations of "The Ugly Duckling," this could be used to supplement the original fairy tale's lesson of being true to yourself and not judging others based on their outward appearance.

Guiding Questions:

- How was Elmer different from the other ducklings? How was he alike?
- Do all boys need to play baseball? Do all girls need to play with dolls?
- When Papa called Elmer a sissy, Elmer was very upset and he ran away. What is an alternative to running away?
- How did you feel when Papa defended Elmer and said, "If Elmer is a sissy, then I wish I were a sissy too!"
- Are there times when you different from everyone else? Are there times when you feel special?

Writing Experience:

This text would supplement the original "Ugly Duckling" fairy tale and it could serve to help students create a modern-day version of the fairy tale in a reader's theatre format.

Title: *South and North, East and West* (The Oxfam Book of Children's Stories)

Author: Michael Rosen (ed.)	Illustrator: multiple
Copyright Date: 1992	Publisher: Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press
Genre: traditional literature	Grade level: 3-5
	Delivery Format: read aloud

Connection to Theme:

This collection of 25 stories from around the world helps to support the idea that each country, each culture, has their own tradition of storytelling and sharing information. As we learn about the world from different points-of-view and from different times, we become more aware of all the diverse people, places and issues that exist in this huge world. As we read each story, we would take a look at its country of origin on a globe.

Guiding Questions:

- Explain what you were thinking as I read this story.
- Why do you think this story was written?
- How else could this story have ended?
- Does this story remind you of anything you've heard before?
- What does this story tell us about its country of origin?

Writing Experience:

In your journal, respond to the story we just read together. You may want to ask yourself: What did you like and dislike about it? What would have made it more interesting for you? Which characters did you connect with? Did the story try to teach the reader a lesson?

Title: *Spreading Poison: A Book about Racism and Prejudice*

Author: John Langone	Illustrator: n/a
Copyright Date: 1993	Publisher: Boston: Little Brown and Company
Genre: survey	Grade level: 7+ Delivery Format: independent read

Connection to Theme:

Because the text would be too overwhelming for fourth graders to read in its entirety, I envision reading aloud the introduction (which I wish I could include here because it sends such a strong message about erasing prejudice from our lives and becoming a tolerant society), then having several students read one of the nine chapters and work together in groups afterward to react to and summarize what they read. I would then read the conclusion aloud and we would share the chapter summaries. It would be a thought-provoking and eye-opening experience to discuss all the different ways in which people are judged and discriminated.

Guiding Questions:

- What was an “Aha!” moment as you were reading your chapter?
- What is the difference between disliking someone for a particular reason and being prejudiced against groups of people you’ve never met?
- When have you judged someone before you met them?
- How did your opinion of the person change after you got to know them?
- When I read the last chapter and mentioned the “Wisians,” what was the first thing that came to mind?

Writing Experience:

Think about what you knew about racism, prejudice and discrimination before we read, shared and discussed this book. Then, think about what you’ve learned, or how it made you feel, or what you think everyone should know. In your journal, describe how reading this text will change how you view other people.

Title: *There's a Skunk in My Bunk*

Author: Joseph McCann		Illustrator: Thomas Gerlach
Copyright Date: 2003	Publisher: Far Hills, NJ: New Horizons Press	
Genre: fantasy, concept	Grade level: K-3	Delivery Format: read aloud

Connection to Theme:

Through this book, Timmy has preconceived notions about different forest animals. As they come into his house and defend themselves against Timmy's prejudiced opinions, Timmy learns a lesson in tolerance. The last page of the book pulls it all together and ends with a simple, but strong message that students will be able to respond to.

Guiding Questions:

- What are our assumptions about skunks? What are our assumptions about raccoons? What are our assumptions about bats?
- What did we learn about these animals? Does it change how you feel about them?
- How did Timmy change this way of thinking?
- Have you ever decided you didn't like a certain food before you tried it? Have you ever judged a person before you knew them?
- What conclusions can you make concerning judging others before you know them?

Writing Experience:

On the last page of the book, Timmy says,

“It is wrong to judge those whom you don't know
By the things people tell you that they feel are so.
Think for yourself and do not quickly judge others,
For the truth is all creatures are sisters and brothers.”

In your journal, respond to this message by describing how you feel about it—do you agree with it? What does it make you think of, or remind you of? What will you remember about Timmy and his animal friends?

Title: *Through My Eyes*

Author: Ruby Bridges (Margo Lundell, ed.)	Illustrator: n/a
Copyright Date: 1999	Publisher: New York: Scholastic Press
Genre: autobiography	Grade level: 4-6
	Delivery Format: independent read

Connection to Theme:

One question that has to be considered when discussing tolerance is, “why is it so difficult for people to celebrate differences and respect each other?” We need to look at history and learn from our mistakes; we need to learn from those who have bravely fought intolerance and keep them in our esteem. Ruby Bridges is one of those inspirations whose story needs to be shared. This text would be part of a literature cluster about the Civil Rights Movement which students could use as a resource.

Guiding Questions:

- What do you already know about the Civil Rights Movement?
- How does Ruby Bridges’ story relate to the Civil Rights Movement?
- What conclusions can you make about the desegregation of schools?
- How would our lives be different if Ruby had not attended an all-white elementary school?
- How is Ruby Bridges an inspiration? How is Mrs. Henry?

Writing Experience:

You’ve been reading Ruby Bridges’ autobiography *Through My Eyes*. How do you see Ruby’s life through your own eyes? How do you see the Civil Rights Movement? What does racism and discrimination and segregation look like through your eyes? Write an essay describing your thoughts about what occurred.

Title: *Tolerance*

Author: Connie Colwell Miller	Illustrator: n/a
Copyright Date: 2006	Publisher: Mankato, MN: Capstone Press
Genre: concept	Grade level: K-3
	Delivery Format: independent read

Connection to Theme:

A basic concept book about tolerance, this could be used as one of the introductory texts to discuss what the term “tolerance” actually means and to provide students with examples of how children can be accepting, respectful and caring.

Guiding Questions:

What are the big ideas in this book?

How can we show tolerance for others in our classroom? in our school? in our town?

On page 18, Phil is laughing and pointing at Sam’s shoes because they are different.

- How do you think Sam is feeling?
- What can Tony do to help Phil show tolerance?
- Have you ever been in a similar situation? Explain what you did.

Writing Experience:

In this book, we are introduced to Tony, Nickole Evans and Marie Taquet. Choose one of these people who have shown tolerance. Step into their shoes and write a journal entry from their point-of-view about decisions they had to make to show tolerance.

Title: *Totally Joe*

Author: James Howe	Illustrator: n/a
Copyright Date: 2005	Publisher: New York: Ginee Seo Books (Atheneum)
Genre: realistic fiction	Grade level: 6-8
	Delivery Format: read aloud

Connection to Theme:

An assignment to create an alphabiography allows Joe to learn more about himself and become more comfortable with who he truly is. Written in the first-person, it is an honest look at a gay adolescent male and the intolerance he faces. If we are to truly create a multicultural atmosphere in the classroom, diversity must extend beyond race and ethnicity; we must expose our students to all the diversity that exists in our society, including sexual orientation.

Guiding Questions:

Joe ends each chapter with a life lesson. Explain if you agree or disagree with these statements, and why.

- Standing up for other people can help them learn to stand up for themselves (p. 6).
- Just be who you are, okay? (p. 12).
- Love your kids. Let them play with Barbies. Let them pick out the stuff in their bedroom. And don't tell them that 'people like that' make you uptight because for all you know your kids might just be 'people like that,' too (p. 47).
- There's a song (not the Beatles) that says we're 'born free,' but how come we have to wait? (p. 75).
- Being who you are isn't a choice (p. 115).
- Popularity is a win-win for the popular kids and a lose-lose for everybody else (p. 136).

Writing Experience:

Joe's final life lesson is "Alphabiographies should be full of *italics*, CAPITAL LETTERS, and exclamation points! (Just like life!) And they should never end with the words 'The End.' They should always end with: *TO BE CONTINUED!*" (p. 189).

Create your own alphabiography. You need only have one page per alphabet letter so do your best to describe yourself or share a story about yourself, your family, your friends. Describe what you like about yourself, explain your opinion about something—just be honest and willing to celebrate your individuality!

Title: “The Ugly Duckling,” *Hans Andersen: His Classic Fairy Tales*

Author: Hans Christian Andersen (translated by Erik Haugaard)		Illustrator: Michael Foreman
Copyright Date: 1844, 1978	Publisher: Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc.	
Genre: fairy tale	Grade level: 4-5	Delivery Format: read aloud, followed by group read

Connection to Theme:

The classic tale of the ugly duckling who was treated unfairly and ostracized because he didn't look like the other ducklings connects perfectly to teaching tolerance: not judging people by how they look on the outside, not making fun of those who look different than us, celebrating diversity and loving yourself.

Guiding Questions:

- All fairy tales have a moral lesson. What is the message in “The Ugly Duckling?”
- What feelings might have caused the ugly duckling to run away?
- What are some alternative ways his mother and siblings could have treated him?
- How do you think his mother and siblings will react to the ugly duckling becoming a swan?
- Describe a time you felt like an ugly duckling and a time when you felt like a beautiful swan.

Writing Experience:

After the read aloud and discussion, students will review the fairy tale again in groups and create a readers theatre format of the story. The script can either be a simplified version of this particular story or the students can create a different version with a different scenario or different characters. The only requirement is they keep to the moral of the story.

Title: *Weslandia*

Author: Paul Fleischman	Illustrator: Kevin Hawkes
Copyright Date: 1999	Publisher: Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press
Genre: fantasy	Grade level: 3-5
	Delivery Format:

Connection to Theme:

At some point or another, everyone feels like they just don't fit in. Wesley does not fit in and instead of giving into the pressure of being the same as everyone else, he relishes in his individuality. This picture book teaches us that it is OK to be different, and although it may take awhile, they will ultimately respect your individuality.

Guiding Questions:

- Imagine you are Wesley. You overhear your parents saying that you stick out. How would that make you feel?
- In what ways are you a unique individual?
- How can you show friends that you appreciate their individuality?
- At the end of the book, it is September and Wesley must return to school. Do you think he'll continue to live in Weslandia?
- What do you think it means to be respected?

Writing Experience:

If you could create your own summer civilization, what would it be like? Think about its location, food you'd have, activities and whatever else would make your civilization reflect your own individuality. Then, create a brochure to share with the class so we can all visit each other!

Title: *What a Wonderful World*

Author: George David Weiss & Bob Thiele		Illustrator: Ashley Bryan
Copyright Date: 1967, 1995		Publisher: New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers
Genre: song lyrics	Grade level: K-2	Delivery Format: read aloud with accompanying music

Connection to Theme:

With so much conflict in the world, sometimes it is beneficial to look at the sunnier side of life, and “What a Wonderful World” does just that. The lyrics and illustrations remind us of the simple but important aspects of the world and provide us with images of diversity, friendship and hope. I can envision how inspirational it would be listening to Louis Armstrong while following along in the book, reflecting on how we can all work together.

Guiding Questions:

- In what ways is our world wonderful?
- How would just reading this book compare to listening to the song while looking at the pages?
- The lyrics mention some simple things, like trees and roses, skies and clouds, which make our world wonderful. What else makes our world wonderful?
- These song lyrics were written 40 years ago, in 1967. In what ways has the world changed since then?

Writing Experience:

This book has very vibrant illustrations. Comment on one of the pages; it could be your favorite or your least favorite, one that you believe connects to the song or one that you personally connected with. How does the picture illustrate that our world is wonderful?

Title: *Wings*

Author: Christopher Myers		Illustrator: Christopher Myers
Copyright Date: 2000	Publisher: New York: Scholastic Press	
Genre: fantasy	Grade level: 2-4	Delivery Format: read aloud

Connection to Theme:

This picture book is a great example of accepting who you are and accepting those who are different from you, respecting and encouraging individuality and diversity. The text and illustrations are thought-provoking, and I can envision students having a lot to say about being true to yourself and speaking up for others.

Guiding Questions:

- What was your first impression of Ikarus Jackson?
- How do you think Ikarus felt when his schoolmates were staring and whispering?
- Why was the girl scared to defend Ikarus? Do you agree? Disagree?
- Even if we don't have wings, what are other reasons people may tease us, laugh at us, or stare at?
- Have you ever spoken up for someone else? How did it feel?

Writing Experience:

The author and illustrator Christopher Myers wrote, "I wanted to create a book that tells kids never to abandon the things that make them different, to be proud of what makes them unique. Every child has his own beauty, her own talents. Ikarus Jackson can fly through the air; I want kids to find their own set of wings and soar with him" (from book jacket).

What do you think of this quote? Did Mr. Myers succeed? Write a response to this quote; you may write it as a journal entry, you may address it to the author, you may write a review of the book.

Title: *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*

Author: Elizabeth George Speare		Illustrator: n/a
Copyright Date: 1958	Publisher: Boston: Houghton Mifflin	
Genre: historical fiction	Grade level: 6	Delivery Format: independent read

Connection to Theme:

This is a classic story about not fitting in and facing intolerance as a result. If we want to create a more tolerant society, we must take a look at our past; even though this is historical fiction, there is enough truth about stereotypes and bigotry for the message to be clear.

Guiding Questions:

- As Kit arrives in Connecticut, she is looking at others and judging, while they are looking at her and judging. What do you think about this situation?
- Why does Kit dress differently than her relatives? Hypothesize how this will affect her life in Wethersfield.
- What assumptions are being made about witchcraft?
- What is our stereotype of a witch? How can we determine if this stereotype is true?
- In what ways do we still judge others based on their religion and/or beliefs?

Writing Experience:

Kit's trial begins in Chapter 19. As you read the account of it, put yourself in Kit's shoes and write a first-person account of the trial from her perspective.

Audio Book Title: *The Hundred Dresses*

Author: Eleanor Estes		Read by: Christina Moore
Copyright Date: 1944, 1998	Produced by: Frederick, MD: Recorded Books, Inc.	
Genre: realistic fiction	Grade level: 4-6	Delivery Format: listen as a class

Connection to Theme:

Because Wanda has a strange last name—Petronski—and wears the same blue dress to school every day, the other girls “make fun” at Wanda’s expense. It is only when Wanda moves away that the girls realize the mistake they made in teasing her. This classic story teaches us that judging and teasing are harmful; things are not always what they happen to be and we must treat others as we would want to be treated,

Guiding Questions:

- As we are introduced to Wanda, what are your initial thoughts about her wearing the same dress to school every day?
- Peggy tells Maddy that Wanda caused the teasing by saying she had 100 dresses in her closet. Do you agree or disagree with Peggy? Does Wanda deserve to be teased?
- This story was written in 1944, over 60 years ago. What do you know about that time in history?
- What lesson can we learn from this story? Do you think Maddy has learned a lesson? Has Peggy?

Writing Experience:

Maddy tried to write a note to her best friend Peggy, asking her to stop playing the “Hundred Dresses Game” every day. But, Maddy couldn’t write the note because she didn’t want Peggy to tease her instead. Write a note to Peggy telling her why she should stop teasing Wanda.

Audio Book Title: *Seedfolks*

Author: Paul Fleischman		Read by: Multiple narrators
Copyright Date: 1997, 2003	Produced by: Middletown, RI: Audio Bookshelf	
Genre: realistic fiction	Grade level: 4+	Delivery Format: listen as class

Connection to Theme:

I chose to use the audio book version of this book because the thirteen characters are portrayed by thirteen different narrators of varying ages and ethnicities. Although they are all different and all have misgivings about one another, they become connected through a community garden and develop the respect and open-mindedness needed for tolerance.

Guiding Questions:

After each character's chapter:

- What do you predict will happen?
- What assumptions is this neighbor making?

At the end:

- How were these neighbors connected?
- What makes a community? Describe your own community.
- How did a simple garden change this community and their thinking?

Writing Experience:

In the last chapter, Florence sees a "little Oriental girl" digging with a trowel and a bag of lima beans by her side. She seems to be a new neighbor. Write the next chapter in the story from the perspective of this girl.

Video: A Place at the Table

By: Robert Hudson & Bobby Houston	Length: 40 minutes
Copyright Date: 2000	Produced by: Montgomery, AL: Teaching Tolerance

Connection to Theme:

This film is narrated by eight teenagers who speak about their family's pursuit of "liberty and justice for all" in the United States. They all have different backgrounds and therefore different perspectives, but they all want to work toward change. In order to understand tolerance, we must examine the intolerance that has existed in the U.S. and this film does just that.

Guiding Questions:

- What feelings or emotions did you have while watching this video?
- What does the "American Dream" mean to you?
- Imagine your family is sitting down to dinner, but there is no seat for you. How would that make you feel?
- How does that situation relate to the film?
- How could we learn more about these struggles for equal rights?

Writing Experience:

These students knew a lot about their family history. How do you think they learned so much? Complete a K-W-L chart of what you already know about your own family and what you would like to know about your family. Then, compile a list of questions to ask your family members.

Video: That's A Family!

Directed by: Debra Chasnoff	Length: 35 minutes
Copyright Date: 2000	Produced by: San Francisco: Women's Educational Media

Connection to Theme:

In teaching students about tolerance, it is necessary to expose children to the diverse family structures that exist in today's society. Although they are more than likely aware of this already, "That's A Family!" provides an opportunity to recognize and celebrate the differences in our families. Although the children featured are shown with their family members, it is only the children that speak in the film; they speak freely, and listening to the perspectives of other children can be an affirming and educational activity for students.

Guiding Questions:

- How are these families similar to your family? How are they different? How are the families in the video similar and different from each other?
 - What is the big idea of this video?
 - What can we learn from these families?
 - Which person in this video would you most like to meet? Why?
- (taken from the That's A Family! discussion/teacher guide, p. 13)

Writing Experience:

The students could respond to the following open-ended prompt:

Imagine that you have been asked to be in a film about different types of families, just like the video we watched. Describe what you may say or what you may do during your segment. Who would be in your family picture? How would you describe your family?

Website: Giraffe Heroes Project
www.giraffe.org/kids.html

Connection to Theme:

A non-profit organization, the Giraffe Heroes Project commends unsung heroes for “sticking their necks out” and being good citizens. The children’s version of the website offers two tall tale versions of how giraffes got their long necks and provides short biographies of Giraffes who have made a difference.

Guiding Questions:

- In what ways do you stick your neck out for others?
- Which people in your life would you nominate to be a Giraffe Hero?
- How are Bea and Stan’s tall tales alike? How are they different?
- How do these tall tales relate to helping others?

Website: It's Not Fair! (PBS Kids' Way Back)
pbskids.org/wayback/fair/index.html

Connection to Theme:

Part of teaching tolerance is to examine intolerance, both what has occurred in the past and what still occurs today. This PBS Kids website about discrimination in the past and present gives students opportunities to learn about segregation, internment camps, child labor, women's suffrage and other struggles. Predictably, my favorite part of this website is the Snapshot feature, which exhibits some of Lewis Hine's images of child labor and asks, "What If . . ."

Guiding Questions:

- Describe an "Aha!" moment you had while you and your partner took the Inequity Quiz.
- How would our lives be different if:
 - schools were still segregated?
 - children still worked in factories?
 - women could not vote?
- Can you describe another unfair situation? How could you make it fair for everyone?
- How did the photographs of child workers make you feel?

Website: KidsPost (*Washington Post*)
www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/kidspost/orbit/kidspost.html

Connection to Theme:

In order to teach tolerance, teachers must encourage students to read about current events throughout the world, to ask questions, to think critically and to take the perspectives of others. *The Washington Post* provides a daily-updated webpage with articles geared toward children as well as features such as profiles of children around the world, which is very engaging.

Guiding Questions:

- In what ways does your family get information about what's happening in the world?
- What would happen if the United States kept to themselves and didn't communicate with other countries? What would happen if no one in Connecticut talked to anyone in New York? What if our class didn't talk to any other class in this school? How would we feel, even after one day?
- If you could be a newspaper reporter and travel anywhere to write an article, where would you go and what is the topic of your article?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of reading a newspaper online?

Website: Mosaic Project
www.mosaicproject.org/

Connection to Theme:

The Mosaic Project is an outdoor school for 4th and 5th grade students spanning five days. Students with different socioeconomic, racial and ethnic backgrounds come together, providing an “opportunity to experience firsthand a diverse setting in which all are welcomed and respected” (What We Do, n.d., para. 1). More than anything, I was impressed by their promotional, informational videos and would like to see how students respond to them.

Guiding Questions:

After watching one of the two videos . . .

- How did the video make you feel? W
- What are the big ideas at the Mosaic Project?
- Do you think peace is possible?

The Mosaic Project’s theme song includes an acrostic poem . . .

“M is for mutual respect
O is for open-mindedness
S is for self-respect
A is for attitude
I is for individuality
C is for community”

- What do these words mean? What do they tell us about this program?

Website: Planet Tolerance (Teaching Tolerance)
www.tolerance.org/pt/index.html

Connection to Theme:

Planet Tolerance is the children's version of the Teaching Tolerance website, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center. Teaching Tolerance provided me with invaluable resources and this kid-friendly web site has a number of non-fiction stories that children can read, and listen to, to gain knowledge and understanding.

Guiding Questions:

Images in Action link:

- What was an "Aha!" moment when digging deeper into the images?

One World Mural link:

- What does "One World" mean to you?

Vote Quest link:

- Do you think Erin can become President of the United States? Explain your opinion.
- Give an example of a quest you've had to take to get something accomplished.

World Without Words link:

- If these words never came to the U.S., which word would you miss the most?
- Do you know what any of these objects are called in another language?

Website: Useful Expressions and Greetings in 26 Languages
www.nypl.org/branch/central/dlc/df/useful.html

Connection to Theme:

On this New York Public Library web page, you can discover how to say over 50 expressions and greetings in 26 languages. As members of a global community, it is integral for students to understand that English is not the only language spoken around the world, and to celebrate that while we may have different words and sounds to express our feelings, our message is still the same (such as “I love you,” “Good morning” and “thank you”).

Guiding Questions:

- Which of these expressions and greetings have you used before? Do you recognize any expressions or greetings from a different language?
- Can you hypothesize why there are so many languages in the world?
- How would you feel if you travelled to France but could not speak French? How does that compare with immigrants coming to the United States not speaking English? How would you feel if you couldn't understand what anyone around you was saying?
- Can you hypothesize why some of these expressions and greetings look or sound similar?

References

The Mosaic Project. (n.d.) What we do. Retrieved April 27, 2007, from <http://www.mosaicproject.org/>.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (1995). *Declaration of Principles on Tolerance*. Retrieved April 27, 2007, from <http://www.unesco.org/cpp/uk/declarations/tolerance.pdf>.