Engaging Public Issues Through Dialogue Journals: 
Pre-Service Teachers and Elementary Students
Read and Respond

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In a qualitative study, 50 pre-service teachers were partnered with 50 elementary students to write each other in dialogue journals responding to texts on public issues. Based upon our analysis of the journals, written reflections from pre-service teachers, and interviews with the elementary teachers in the project, three findings emerged: student motivation for reading and writing increased, both types of students gained perspective consciousness, and elementary teachers found meaningful ways to integrate social studies with language arts. These findings suggest multiple avenues for future research surrounding dialogue journals, student engagement with public issues texts, and teacher education.

Key Words: Content Literacy, Democratic Education, Elementary Social Studies Instruction, Motivation/engagement, Professional Development, Teacher Education, Writing

Dear Misty,

I think that child labor is a horrible idea—no exceptions. Their family may need the money, but they can’t work because they’re not educated! That means that they’ll need to be educated! But how? There’s enough places to educate about 1 million people, but with a country with 1 billion people and about over 100% of the estimated amount of kids in labor? I don’t know how 1 million or so kids are supposed to learn. That’s about 1/35 of the kid population! I can’t imagine what it would be like to be a victim of child labor. I can only hope that the children there can be more educated.

Sincerely,

Trenton

2/12/07
Introduction

he above journal response is from an elementary student who participated in a dialogue journal activity. He was addressing his partner, a pre-service teacher in a methods course taught at a university in the western United States. Using qualitative methodology, we examined the dialogue journal activity over a 12-week period. During the 12 weeks, pre-service teachers and elementary students responded to each other about public issues based on their reading of a shared text. Two classes of pre-service teachers were partnered with two classes of elementary students, one fourth-grade class and the other a fifth-grade class. Our purpose was to examine how elementary students read and wrote about public issues with adults. A citizenry that is able to read, respond, and dialogue about public issues is fundamental to the proper functioning of a democracy. Students must learn to connect literacy with effective citizenship. As we will illustrate, the participants in our study made this connection. We also examined how the dialogue journal activity might help pre-service teachers understand the reading, writing, and perspectives of elementary students, and as a result, how to respond to their elementary student partners. Finally, based upon our interviews with the elementary teachers who participated in our study, we examine the ways in which dialogue journals can increase integration between language arts and social studies in the elementary school curriculum.

Social Studies and Critical Literacy in the Elementary School Curriculum

Under demands of accountability, the presence of social studies instruction in elementary classrooms has diminished (Burroughs, Groce, & Webeck, 2005). Student engagement with public issues is an important part of the social studies curriculum (Parker, 2003), but the chance to engage with public issues is diminished when social studies is marginalized. Gahan Baily, Edward Shaw, and Donna Hollifield (2006) found that during the limited instructional time that social studies is taught in elementary grades, it is taught predominantly through the use of textbooks and questioning that does not call upon students’ higher-order thinking skills. Students are denied the opportunity to develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to participate intelligently in a democracy, and teachers are denied the opportunity to understand the perspectives of their students. Furthermore, reading comprehension is enhanced when students are taught to read and respond to texts critically, asking questions about which perspectives are represented in a text, and which may be left out (Hall & Piazza, 2008). This kind of reading comprehension instruction dovetails with the goals of democratic education.

Content integration, for example, through integration of language arts and social studies, has been proposed as a way to increase the presence of social studies in the curriculum (e.g. Lindquist, 2002). We examined the dialogue journal activity as means for, among other things, increasing the presence of social studies in the elementary curriculum by connecting dialogue about public issues with literacy practices.

Democratic Education and Dialogue Journals

Through reading texts about current issues and writing about those texts in dialogue journals, students can make meaningful connections between the goals of literacy and democratic education. Multiple social studies theorists have emphasized the importance of deliberation in the social studies curriculum (Camicia, 2007a, 2009; Hess, 2008; Parker, 2003). Democracies require citizens who are able to deliberate public issues in order to choose a course of action that is in the public
interest (Gutmann, 1987; Habermas, 1996). John Dewey (1966) believed that it is essential for students in a democracy to learn how to view and deliberate from multiple perspectives and come to an understanding about the best course of action. Vivian Paley (1992) provides a good illustration of how this works in elementary classrooms. In her kindergarten classroom, students deliberate the fairness of class rules. One such rule states “You can’t say that you can’t play.” As students discuss this rule, they begin to see that such rules or public issues have multiple perspectives, including the perspectives of those who are excluded from play. Other theorists provide examples of children deliberating global issues such as child labor (Bigelow & Peterson, 2002) and environmental degradation (Noddings, 2005). All of these issues can lead students to view public issues from multiple perspectives.

The ability to see public issues from multiple perspectives can be described as perspective consciousness. Multicultural education is also an essential component of democratic education (Banks, Hahn, Banks, Cortes, Merryfield, Moodley, Murphy-Shigematsu, Osler, Parker, Purcell, & Ziadeh, 2005). In a multicultural democracy, it is vital that students view public issues from multiple cultural perspectives. Just as Paley’s (1992) rule stating “You can’t say you can’t play” has multiple positions, so also social issues have multiple perspectives based upon, to name a few identities, a person’s race, sexual orientation, gender, ethnicity, language/s, and class. Perspective consciousness is an important component in the reduction of prejudice (Allport, 1979; Camicia, 2007b; Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005) and a curriculum that is responsive to the needs of all students (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Dialogue journals increase access to literacy and language development for scores of students who are often marginalized in classroom conversations. For example, the use of partner journals with English language learners (ELLs) has been shown by researchers to increase student engagement and language acquisition (Kim, 2005; Peyton & Seyoum, 1989). Hilda Hernández and Devon Metzger (1996) recommend using written expression and communication about public issues in order to increase language acquisition, critical literacy, and social studies education among language-minority students. All students benefit from increasing the number of perspectives in the curriculum. Finally, teachers benefit from the dialogue journal activity because they gain important insights into the perspectives of their students. Pre-service teachers gain valuable insights into the motivation, writing, and thought processes of elementary students when
the pre-service teachers form pen pal relationships with elementary students.

The Study

Using qualitative methodology (Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994), we examined student writing in the dialogue journals, the written reflections of pre-service teachers, and interview transcripts from the elementary teachers who participated in the study. The data were analyzed using the constant comparative method (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

In all, 100 students and two elementary school teachers participated in this study. Fifty of the students were enrolled in two sections of a social studies methods and practicum class at a university in the western United States. These students were predominantly White and only four were male. Fifty of the students were elementary school students in two classes, one fourth grade and another fifth grade. The elementary students were predominantly White with approximately equal amounts of boys and girls. We partnered 50 of the pre-service teachers with 50 elementary students. The teachers of the elementary students also participated in the study.

We chose the school because of its reputation for constructivist learning philosophy and promotion of student voice and free speech. The commitment to these qualities is reflected in the schools categorization as a First Amendment School. We call the school Canyon View. One of the teachers in our study described the school this way:

I think another thing that’s good about this school is that the students have voice. They know that at any time they can write a petition to the principal or to the teachers and that they have a voice that is valued. And if it’s something that, you know, they write a petition for something that we can’t do, we don’t just say no, we explain why we cannot do that. So, I know that probably goes with the constructivism that we teach them— we inform them, not just say no.

Because we were interested in the conceptual connections between literacy practices and democratic education, we believed Canyon View to be a good site to examine these connections.

The dialogue journal activity lasted 12 weeks. During the 12 weeks, students wrote to their partners weekly about articles published in *Time for Kids*. These articles were written at a fourth through sixth grade level. At the end of the 12-week period, the pre-service teachers wrote a reflection about the activity. Finally, we interviewed the elementary school teachers using semi-structured interview questions listed in the Appendix 1. All data were uploaded to a Atlas.ti qualitative software database for analysis based upon the constant comparative method (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). First, we read all data to gain overall impressions of how the data might be understood in terms of our research questions and theoretical lenses. Second, we recorded our initial thoughts in the form of memos. Our

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theoretical lenses involving democratic education and dialogue journals guided our analysis of emerging themes, which we developed into codes. Third, we reread all transcripts and applied these codes to the data. Finally, we compared and contrasted coding within and between data sources in an iterative fashion. This process allowed us to merge codes into themes and findings.

Benefits of the Dialogue Journal Activity

We found three main benefits of the dialogue journal activity: student motivation for reading and writing increased, both types of students gained perspective consciousness, and elementary teachers found meaningful ways to integrate social studies with language arts.

Student Motivation

Student motivation for reading and writing increased greatly. Teachers told multiple stories of their students begging to read the dialogue journals when the journals were delivered to their classrooms. The connection elementary students had with their pre-service partners motivated them to want to read and write with an intensity that the classroom teachers did not see in their other reading and writing activities. We attribute this, in part, to the connections students were making between social context, reading, and writing. One of the elementary teachers describes her students’ ability to form these connections and increase motivation:

[For] the first one he’d only written like three or four sentences, and the last one he’d written a page and a half. And so at the beginning when I established that it had to be at least 10 sentences or more, it was like, “Oh, 10 sentences!” And at the end it’d be like, “Mrs. J., can I please have more than a page?” You know, and so it was such a real life application of writing that it was great.

We also attribute the students’ increased motivation to the social context. Having an authentic audience for writing increases motivation for the writer and helps the writer define the purpose for the writing; in contrast, many school-based forms of writing have no audience beyond the teacher and no purpose other than one determined by the teacher. When students feel ownership of their writing, their motivation increases.

The increase in student motivation also was evident in their writing and engagement with public issues. Both categories of students, elementary and pre-service, engaged with public issues in new and meaningful ways. The articles in Time for Kids provided a common text describing a public issue and a common point of departure for students to engage in written dialogue with their partner; this social activity allowed the students and pre-service teachers to exchange perspectives. A pre-service teacher wrote, “I like talking about public issues with my partner because it gave something for us to write about that we both have in common.” Democratic theorists have long known that the key to a vibrant democracy is a citizenry that communicates in what Jürgen Habermas (1996) calls the public sphere. Student engagement in this common public sphere is an essential component of democratic education. In the following passage, the 2008 presidential primary provides the common space for an elementary student to engage with public issues:

Who do you want to be president? I either [sic] want Hillary C. or Obama. I don’t want to be president because it would just be to [sic] hard for me. Do you want to be president? Just like you I want a president to be honest and good values. I also think he or she
should give good and caring speeches. I don’t know what the Middle East is. But I don’t like George [sic] Bush. He blows things up. (Fifth grade female student)

By inviting a response from her pre-service journal partner, this elementary student illustrates an advanced understanding of the public sphere. It is not a place where citizens speak or write monologically. It is a space where citizens engage in dialogue about public issues. After the student above invites the opinion of her partner, she forms and expresses her opinion about the qualities of a good and bad president.

Student motivation increased because literacy practices were connected to social context. In addition to the proximal social context of a dialogue between an elementary student and a pre-service student, the dialogue journal activity opened a global social context. In the following, a student teacher and a fifth grader engage in a dialogue about one of the articles on child labor in India:

The student teacher wrote: It makes me sad to see pictures of children working like in the article about India. What do you think we could do to help those countries change the way they make children work? I think we could help them find better jobs for their parents so the children wouldn’t have to work and they could go to school. 5th grader wrote back: Maybe we could write a letter to the president and ask him if he could help? I feel really bad they don’t get an education. I mean I thought that education comes first but apparently [sic] work does, and no playing that would hurt me so bad. I think this is horrible. Gap was my favorite clothing store but now I don’t want to go there again.

The shared space of the dialogue journal activity increased student engagement with reading, writing, and public issues. Motivation to read and write was increased because reading and writing were connected to the larger social context in which students wrote about public issues in a dialogue with their partner.

**Perspective Consciousness**

Both categories of students demonstrated perspective consciousness. As we report in the following sections, the elementary students grappled with a different type of perspective conscious than their pre-service teacher partners.

**Pre-service Teachers**

Pre-service teachers also became aware of the perspectives of the elementary school students. The ability of children to form opinions often is underestimated by adults. Public issues and controversial issues sometimes are viewed as developmentally inappropriate for young minds. This viewpoint is closely tied to Western notions of human development (Burman, 2008). A pre-service teacher expresses her skepticism about traditional notions of readiness, “From the partner journals I learned that kids really do start forming their own opinions at a young age.” The pre-service students in our study showed an increasing awareness that young children are aware and able to read, write, and engage in dialogue about a wide range of public issues.

**Multiple social studies theorists have emphasized the importance of deliberation in the social studies curriculum.**
In the following, a female pre-service teacher shows her increased perspective consciousness of her elementary student partner:

It was good to get a different perspective as well. For example, the article on child labor fueled some decidedly strong reactions from my student partner. I felt saddened by the article, but I didn't apply it to myself the same way she did.

Another female pre-service teacher wrote:

I guess I thought my student would be more sheltered from the world and what was going on. For example, talking about the war in Iraq or the child labor, even the upcoming elections. My student seemed to know a lot about it. Although she did have more of a child's perspective about it, she still knew more than I thought she would.

While the concept of perspective consciousness was part of the pre-service teachers' university coursework, the dialogue journal activity created an opportunity to see how the concept applies to communication with children. The pre-service teachers in the above passages do not view the issue of child labor as one in which the teacher deposits information monologically into the mind of a student. Instead, the pre-service teachers acknowledged and valued the perspectives of their students as different. This understanding of the perspectives of their students also provided important opportunities for pre-service students to learn how to respond to the elementary students' writing. In a reflection on the dialogue journal activity, a pre-service teacher wrote:

What I liked most was it gives us, as future teachers, an insight into how students write, think, and view the world from varying perspectives.

These are "real-life" students and we really will need to understand how students observe and respond to public issues and things that are happening outside of their school or home.

Another pre-service teacher wrote:

I learned so much from writing to my student at Canyon View. I think that I sometimes don't give young students enough credit. They know so much more than I think they do sometimes. I was surprised with some of the responses my student wrote and all that she knew about some of the topics.

These excerpts illustrate the ways in which pre-service teachers developed perspective consciousness, and with the new understanding, struggled with new strategies for establishing meaningful dialogues with students.

**Elementary Students**

Elementary students invited their pre-service partners' opinions about public issues. This indicates perspective consciousness. Through their dialogues in the journals, elementary students demonstrated an understanding that public issues have multiple perspectives. This evolving consciousness was illustrated in the question written by an elementary student to her pre-service teacher partner “Who do you want to be president?” These invitations to dialogue over public issues illustrate an evolving understanding that people have different opinions on public issues.

Our data concerning the perspective consciousness of the elementary students was limited because we did not ask them to write reflections upon the process as we did with the pre-service teachers. Elementary students frequently made comments during class discussions prior to and after the journal writing activity, indicating that they wanted to know
how and what the university students thought about these issues. Our future research will focus more upon the views of the elementary students in this regard.

**Strategies for Written Dialogues with Children**

The topic of how to dialogue with children about public issues is of great interest in the social studies education literature (Hess, 2009). The main concern in such dialogues is to let students know the teacher has a perspective without having that perspective interfere with a student’s ability to form an opinion. Because a healthy democracy requires citizens who are able to form and express individual opinions on public issues, democratic education requires that teachers encourage these capabilities. A pre-service teacher describes her attempt to not influence her elementary partner as follows.

One thing that did surprise me is how much my writing influenced him. Even the fact that if I didn’t write much, he didn’t respond with much information either. I tried to be super careful and ask him his opinions first and be very vague with mine but still felt some influence about certain topics. I feel that might have to do with the fact that students feel that they need to respond with the right answer. This is difficult because in the real world, there is never just one right answer.

The pre-service teacher in this excerpt first observes that her participation in dialogue influences the student’s participation. This might be one of the keys to student motivation in the dialogue journal activity. The pre-service teacher also demonstrates that she values the dialogue journal activity and the opinions of her student, and the student mirrors this value in their written response. Next, the pre-service teacher suggests encouraging the student to offer an opinion first so she does not interfere with the student’s formation of an opinion. Last, the pre-service teacher suggests that the dialogue journal activity might be counterintuitive for students because elementary students might think that there is one correct answer to public issues. This awareness on the part of the pre-service teacher points back to perspective consciousness as a rationale for teaching students that there are usually multiple perspectives on public issues. A pre-service teacher discusses her strategies for encouraging meaningful responses from her student:

I found myself editing and really thinking about the questions I wanted to ask and how students would view those questions. I also looked more carefully at the articles I would read to think of it from the perspective of my student and what they may find interesting or what to respond about.

Here, the pre-service teacher used her perspective consciousness of her elementary partner as a starting point for engaging her partner with dialogue about public issues. The crafting of response questions is based not on the pre-service teacher’s perspective, but on her perspective consciousness of the student. This is a key component of authentic dialogue. She also indicates a key component of successful dialogue; public issues that students find meaningful. For example, students seemed to be more engaged with the article on child labor than any other article.

Finally, the pre-service teachers thought about ways to improve the dialogue journal activity. For example, one pre-service teacher observed, “It might be interesting to have multiple articles on the same topic and see the different perspectives that are present in the journaling world and political world.” This observation returns again to the value of perspective consciousness in the integration of language arts and social studies curriculum.
This pre-service teacher recommends extending the structure of the lesson from students understanding that issues have multiple perspectives, but also, texts are produced from different perspectives. Observations such as this provide guidance for future research and practices related to the dialogue journal activity.

**Integration of Language Arts and Social Studies Education**

Elementary teachers in our study found the dialogue journal activity to be a powerful way to integrate language arts and social studies education. In addition to the benefits of increased motivation, perspective consciousness, and engagement with public issues, students developed higher-level thinking skills and expository writing skills. All of these learning outcomes amplify the positive learning outcomes related to the integration of language arts and social studies education. By combining dialogue journals and democratic education, all participants in our study, teachers and students, forged connections between motivation, reading, writing, dialogue, and effective citizenship.

As we reported in our first finding on motivation, the elementary teachers we interviewed observed an increase in student motivation to read and write during the activity. The authentic dialogue in which students participated through reading and writing about public issues was very motivational. The authenticity related to motivation seemed to lie in the type of relationships that pre-service teachers formed with their elementary counterparts; having a real audience for writing also increases motivation. While elementary teachers described themselves as being in relatively monologic relationships with their students, they described the pre-service teachers as forming dialogic relationships with elementary students. One elementary teacher remarked, “We’re critiquing [student writing] as we write back to them, whereas the university students were not critiquing them. They were dialoguing, and it made a huge difference.” The combination of reading, writing, and authentic dialogue over public issues was highly motivational to elementary students.

Elementary teachers reported an improvement in student writing during the dialogue journal activity. The integration of language arts and social studies gave students a sense of purpose and perspective consciousness in their writing. One of the teachers described it this way:

> I saw their writing skills improve, and I felt that they improved better through the journals… I would hear them going back and rereading something they’d written before and they’d go, “Oh, why did I write that? It doesn’t sound very good.” You know, and they had it there and — and one of them even came to me and said, “Mrs. J., look, here’s my first one and here’s my last one. Look at this!”

Because students participated in an authentic dialogue with pre-service teachers, they gained new purpose and awareness for their writing. They began to gain perspective consciousness (also known as a characteristic of audience awareness) of the person who would read their writing. Audience awareness is a feature that distinguishes novice from expert writing (Carvalho, 2002). Often students must imagine an audience, but dialogue journals, because they have a real audience, scaffold students’ development of audience awareness. Finally, the elementary teachers noticed students making meaningful connections with reading, writing, dialogue, and discussion of public issues. An elementary teacher stated:
They would talk more with each other about the current events that were going on based on what they’d read in the journal or what their partner had written to them. And then they would come in some days and say, “Hey Mrs. J., did you see on the news last night, or did you read in the newspaper . . .” And I think it just made them more aware that there’s things going on outside their little world.

Elementary students were gaining an awareness of public issues beyond their immediate experiences. The dialogue journal activity expanded the elementary students’ understanding of public issues and prompted them to watch and read the news from sources outside of the texts that they read for the dialogue journal activity. They were not only consumers of information; they were also learning how to negotiate meanings and differences of perspectives through their writing. As one elementary teacher told us:

It gave them an avenue to voice their opinion about the article because, the university students would write, “I read this article, what do you think about d-d-d.” And be specific about a part of that. And my kids would write back, “Well, I thought . . .” And we would talk about, it is okay to have a difference of opinion, as long as you keep it respectful, and so it just broadened their horizons in so many ways.

The connections between motivation, reading, writing, dialogue, and democratic education were integrated through the dialogue journal activity. As illustrated in the above excerpt, the elementary teachers observed their students responding to texts on public issues and learning to negotiate differences in perspectives. This is the work of an enlightened and engaged citizen in a democracy. The teachers found this to be a compelling reason to add the dialogue journal activity as a way to integrate language arts and social studies. This integration is powerful because the learning outcomes end up being more than the sum of the separate subject area parts.

**Conclusion and Implications**

Discussion and deliberation of public issues are vital components of healthy democracies. Students must learn how to discuss controversial public issues (CPI) and teachers must learn how to discuss and teach CPI’s. In this study, we examined how elementary students and pre-service teachers discuss CPI’s through the use of dialogue journals. Our findings suggest that the dialogue journal activity is productive in vital components of social studies education and language arts education. These findings indicate an increase in elementary and pre-service teacher engagement in writing and dialogue about controversial issues. Both categories of participants were motivated to engage in writing and dialogue through the dialogue journal activity. All students increased their perspective consciousness and that of those with different social positioning than themselves. This is a vital component of democratic communities in increasingly global and multicultural communities. Finally, the demands of accountability in the areas of language arts and mathematics have narrowed or pushed social studies education out of the curriculum. The dialogue journal activity provides a compelling rationale for educators to include social studies in their curriculum as a source of engagement with community, connecting literacy with larger goals related to socially just, multicultural, democratic communities.

Similar to the findings of Katie Van Sluys and Tasha Tropp Laman (2006) who found that written conversations helped elementary students connect reading and writing to a larger social context, our findings indicate that
the dialogue journal activity implies multiple possibilities for increasing student understanding of how literacy practices are integrally connected to the context of dialogue in a multicultural and democratic society. Teachers can extend our findings to include texts from multiple cultural perspectives. An annotated bibliography of texts that could serve around a dialogue over public issues is presented in Appendix 2. We include the annotated bibliography in order to help elementary school teachers develop dialogues in their classrooms. The dialogue journal project could be extended in creative ways with book clubs and literature circles by creating spaces where teachers and students can dialogue about CPI’s. Reading and writing about shared texts with a partner through dialogue journals offers students a safe space in which to explore public issues. This strategy can be applied to many aspects of developing effective citizens. Students find the authentic dialogue motivating, which leads to greater investment in reading, writing, and learning.

Future Research

The benefits of the dialogue journals among the participants of our study were clear. The main differences between the positionalities of participants were age (elementary and university ages), educational levels, the intents of their coursework, sometimes gender, and socioeconomic status. Future research could focus upon many other differences related to identity and positionality such as race, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, languages spoken, and geopolitical belonging. In addition, the types of controversial public issues that students dialogue about could greatly increase potentials for student understanding in both literacy and socially just, democratic, multicultural communities. We see these as vital areas for research in democratic dialogue across differences.

References


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Citation for this Article
Appendix 1

Semi-structured Interview Questions

Questions for teachers:

1. How many years have you been teaching?

2. How would you describe your school?

3. How would you describe your approach to teaching social studies?

4. Have you done activities similar to the dialogue journal activity? If so, what do you think were the benefits of those activities?

5. What does a typical dialogue journal lesson look like in your classroom?

6. How are your students responding to the dialogue journal activity?

7. What, if any, do you think are the most significant benefits of the dialogue journal activity to your students?

8. What recommendations do you have for improving the dialogue journal activity?

9. How do you think the dialogue journal activity does or does not integrate your curriculum?

10. Would you recommend the dialogue journal activity to your colleagues?

11. Given that social studies is not often taught in most elementary classrooms, do you think that the dialogue journal activity could increase the chances that other elementary teachers would teach social studies?
Appendix 2

Annotated Bibliography of Children’s Books That Address Public Issues.


Cherry, Lynn and Braasch, Gary. (2008). *How We Know What We Know About Our Changing Climate: Scientists and Kids Explore Global Warming*. Nevada City, CA: Dawn Publications. Cherry and Braasch provide a scientific view of global change that depends upon careful observation and documentation. Discusses how students can be part of the data collection process.


Naylor, Phyllis Reynolds. (2001). *Walker’s crossing*. NY: Atheneum. For grades 6 and up, this book presents Ryan’s dilemmas that arise when his brother Gil joins a white supremacist paramilitary group.

Nye, Naomi Shihab. (1999). *Habibi*. NY: Simon & Schuster. When Liyana’s family moves back to Palestine from St. Louis, and when Liyana falls in love with a Jewish boy, the tensions of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict are brought to a scale that students in grades five and up can relate to.

Ryan, Pamela Munoz. (2000). *Esperanza rising*. NY: Scholastic. When her wealthy father is killed by bandits, Esperanza and her mother immigrate to California from Mexico where they become farm laborers and participate in labor strikes of the 1930s.


Uchida, Yoshiko. (1993). *The bracelet*. Illustrated by Joanna Yardley. NY: Putnam. Seven-year-old Emi and her family are sent to an internment camp during World War II.