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Race & Gender in Children's Literature

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Race & Gender in Children's Books

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Public Sociology Project - by Holly Ritchie

Books Used (In Order of Publication Date)

- 1.) Madeline by Ludwig Bemelmans - 1939.
- 2.) Wendy and the Gypsies by Chrystal Jackson - 1977.
- 3.) I Unpacked My Grandmother's Trunk by Susan Ramsay Hoguet - 1983.
- 4.) Mrs. Katz and Tush by Patricia Polacco - 1992.
- 5.) Down the Road by Alice Schertle - 1995.
- 6.) The Full Belly Bowl by Jim Aylesworth - 1998.
- 7.) Joy's Discovery by Jane Chu - 1999.
- 8.) One Halloween Night by Mark Teague - 1999.
- 9.) Joseph Had a Little Overcoat by Simms Taback - 1999.
- 10.) Salt in His Shoes by Delaris Jordan, Roslyn M. Jordan, and Kadir Nelson.

Books Used (In Order of Publication Date)

- 11.) The Light of Christmas by Richard Paul Evans - 2002.
- 12.) Seven for a Secret by Laurence Anholt and Jim Coplestone - 2006.
- 13.) Henry's Freedom Box by Kadir Nelson and Ellen Levine - 2007.
- 14.) Midnight Superhero by Eliot Jones - 2009.
- 15.) Garmann's Street by Stian Hole - 2010.
- 16.) The Good Garden by Katie Smith Milway and Sylvie Daigneault - 2010.
- 17.) The Amazing Adventures of Bumblebee Boy by David Soman - 2011.
- 18.) Last Stop on Market Street by Matt De La Pena - 2015.
- 19.) Little Red by Bethan Woollwin - 2016.

20.) I Am Not a Number by Jenny Kay Dupuis - 2016

Male vs. Female Characters

Males

Young Males: 23.

Middle Adult Males: 30.

Old Males: 10.

Overall: 63.

Females

Young Females: 28.

Middle Adult Females: 22.

Old Females: 7.

Overall: 57.

Race/Ethnicity Included in the Sample Books

White: 69.

African American: 22.

Hispanic: 10.

Chinese: 3.

Jewish: 1.

Indian: 6.

Other: 4.

A Closer Look: I Am Not a Number by Jenny Kay Dupuis - 2016.

This is the only book that contained any people classified as Indian.

It is about a group of 4 Indian children that were taken from their parents in India, and were sent to a very strict Catholic school in Canada. While at this school, both boys and girls were forced to cut their hair, were disciplined harshly (like being smacked with a ruler) if an instructor (all Catholic nuns) did not like what they were doing or did not find it satisfactory.

There was a historical information section at the back of the book that posted the historical dates that Indian children were taken far away to schools in Canada.

A Closer Look: Madeline by Ludwig Bemelmans - 1939.

This book has a simple concept. It follows the story of a young french girl named Madeline, and her adventures. She attends a Catholic boarding school in Paris with eleven other young girls. Madeline is depicted as the brave girl who is not scared of anything. This is a franchise by Bemelmans, but this book in particular showed Madeline being brave.

Later in the book, she had to get her appendix removed, and it ended with her showing off her scar proudly and being brave again.

A Closer Look: Mrs. Katz and Tush by Patricia Polacco - 1992.

This book is specifically a Passover story. An elderly Jewish woman, Mrs. Katz, and a young African American boy, Larnel Moore, become friends and develop a bond over a cat that they named Tush. Larnel asked Mrs. Katz to adopt this kitten, Tush, and Mrs. Katz agreed on the condition that Larnel helps her take care of the kitten.

It briefly touches on both of their cultures and the difficulties they both face, while also still being light hearted and friendly. Mrs. Katz told Larnel about moving to America from Poland, and Larnel learns that the Jewish and African Americans share a lot of trials with their cultures.

I AM NOT A NUMBER

Written by Jenny Kay Dupuis and Kathy Kacer
Illustrated by Gillian Newland

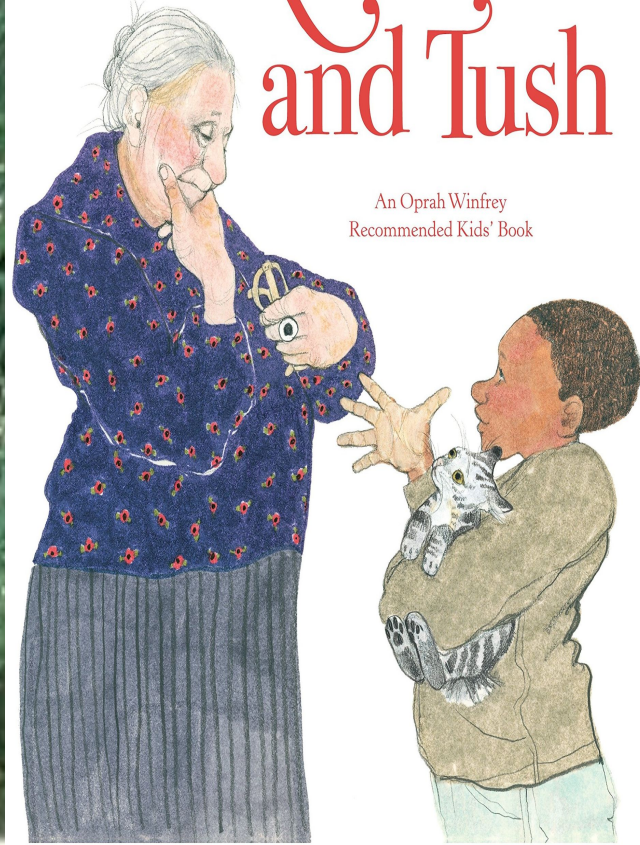


Patricia Polacco



Mrs. Katz and Tush

An Oprah Winfrey
Recommended Kids' Book



Roles & Stereotypes

-Middle aged women are typically domesticated, if they aren't just shown when speaking to another character. The books with more diversity in race are more likely to show more diversity when it comes to women's roles. There is not really any diversity for the men. They are depicted as business-like, or working outside, unless they are also shown casually in conversation.

-If young girls are shown as the main character, they were more so depicted as strong and able, or they were not the main character.

-Only one book had another language that was mentioned (but not spoken in the book) - Joy's Discovery by Jane Chu - 1999.

-None of the books really challenged stereotypes, but more racially diverse books were more likely to show women doing just more than cooking or men doing more than just laborious work.

Socialization of Children

-Whether or not it is on purpose, children are socialized to prefer their own race and gender. Children who live in more diverse places may have access to more diverse books and may be taught to be more inclusive and value equality.

Children who live in less diverse areas are likely to learn the opposite.

Not only do parents influence their children, but children are influenced by other children. This is especially true with racial slurs, stereotypes, and gender roles.

Books are a little more diverse today, but only a little. More African American characters are being depicted, but there is an even smaller representation for other races and ethnicities.