

Lehman, B. A., Freeman, E. B., & Scharer, P. L. (2010). *Reading Globally, K-8: Connecting Students to the World Through Literature*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin. 147 pp. ISBN 978-1-4129-7392-2 (paper w/cd)

Reviewed by Myra Zarnowski, Queens College, City University of New York

Keeping Up with International Children's Literature

Since World War II, efforts to promote the use of international children's literature as a way of advancing peace and understanding have gained steady momentum. Beginning with Jella Lepman's exceptional work in first founding the International Youth Library in Munich in 1949 and later founding the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) in 1953, the movement has continued to grow, supported by several significant books sponsored by IBBY. These books, which serve as guides for educators, provide annotated bibliographies of recommended international books for children and brief essays by educators and publishers.

Children's Books from Other Countries (Tomlinson, 1998) deals with international books written between 1950-1996; *The World through Children's Books* (Stan, 2002) provides annotations for books written between 1997-2000; *Crossing Boundaries with Children's Books* (Gebel, 2006) annotates books written between 2000-2004.

The book reviewed here, *Reading Globally, K-8: Connecting Students to the World Through Literature*, by Barbara A. Lehman, Evelyn B. Freeman and Patricia L. Scharer further extends these efforts. Written by three widely published scholars in children's literature, who were also editors of IBBY's journal *Bookbird: A*

Journal of International Children's Literature, this book provides background information about global literature, practical information for teachers, and suggestions for further reading. However, what distinguishes this book from the others is that the authors show how to align international children's literature with national standards, how to integrate these books across all curriculum areas, and how to address concerns frequently voiced by teachers. In addition, a CD included with the book provides a list of recommended readings for teachers, resources for locating and learning about global children's literature, and an annotated list of the 431 children's books cited within the book. Taken together, this is both an informative and highly practical resource.

The book begins with an introductory chapter and then consists of three parts. The introductory chapter discusses the need for global literature and how it contributes to children's cognitive, emotional, moral, and social development. The authors also distinguish between global literature, which extends beyond U.S. boundaries, and multicultural literature which deals with the "parallel cultures" inside the U.S.

Part one, "Infusing Global Literature Throughout the Curriculum" consists of five separate chapters showing how international literature can be a significant part of every curriculum area. Separate chapters are devoted to teaching theme studies, language arts, social studies, science and mathematics,

and the arts. Each chapter shows how international children's literature can be used to meet content area standards while, at the same time, broadening children's global perspectives. For example, chapter 5, "Science and Mathematics," illustrates how the recently articulated STEM goals—goals for teaching science, technology, engineering, and mathematics—can be addressed using international children's books. When teaching topics such as habitats around the world or environmental change, for instance, the literature helps place topics and issues within an international setting. As the authors state, "Global books broaden students' awareness of these topics' problem-solving applications to international contexts and strengthen appreciation for other cultures' significant contributions to the fields" (p. 84).

Chapter 4, "Social Studies," will be of particular interest to readers of this journal. Here the authors show how international children's literature promotes NCSS standards. As examples, they discuss literature dealing with a primary grade topic and an upper elementary/middle school topic. When discussing the primary topic, "Wake Up World," the authors show how the literature enables readers to see the similarities shared by children around the world as well as their cultural differences. When discussing the elementary/middle school topic of the World War II and the Holocaust, they show how literature can support several curriculum strands such as "Time, Continuity, and Change," "Power, Authority and Governance," and "Global Connections." Throughout the chapter, the authors illustrate ways to connect international children's literature both by the topic and by NCSS standards. The

illustrations are clear and could be put to use immediately.

Part two, "Issues Teachers Face," contains a useful chapter on evaluating international children's literature. It includes a guide for evaluating global literature that raises questions about such criteria as authenticity and literary merit as well as questions designed for evaluating nonfiction and translated books. This is a helpful guide for teachers seeking appropriate books for the classroom. A separate chapter, "Frequently Asked Questions About Global Literature," raises persistent questions all teachers face. A sample includes the following: What's the best way to handle sensitive topics like war, prejudice, human injustices, and cultural taboos like bodily functions or practices? How should I respond if parents object to a book? How can I help my students relate to places, people, times, and events they have never seen, heard, or experienced? By confronting the everyday obstacles and opportunities teachers deal with, *Reading Globally, K-8* responds to today's world of teaching and learning.

While this book—like the previous titles sponsored by IBBY—clearly succeeds in identifying and providing sound arguments for the place of international children's literature in schools, the field of children's literature has yet to supply convincing studies of the impact of this literature on children's reading, writing, and thinking. Simply put, how does international children's literature influence children's thinking about world peace and international understanding? Such work would truly provide support for the vision of Jella Lepman and those who continue to pursue her ideals.

As we anticipate these much needed studies, the sobering reality is that

international children's literature makes up only a small percentage of the children's literature available in this country (Marcus, 2010). It is estimated that no more than 1% of children's books published in the U.S. are translated books imported from abroad, and

that figure has remained steady for at least 20 years. Given this situation, *Reading Globally, K-8* is an extremely useful resource for finding the best of what is available in order to extend the global perspectives of today's youth. That is a major contribution.

References

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About the Author

Myra Zarnowski is a professor in the Department of Elementary and Early Childhood Education at Queens College, City University of New York.