

The Cultural Diversity Database (CDD) developed by the National Centre for Australian Children's Literature Inc (NCAACL)



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Background to the CDD

<https://www.ncacl.org.au/resources/databases/welcome-to-the-ncacl-cultural-diversity-database/>

Use the freely available CDD

<https://www.ncacl.org.au/ncacl-cultural-diversity-database/>

Introduction

The Australian Human Rights Commission recognises Australia as a country of many different cultures. One in four Australians was born overseas. Nearly 20 per cent of Australians speak a language other than English at home. Those of us involved with children's books have noticed the wealth of Australian books for young people reflecting that cultural diversity. We wanted to bring these books to the attention of those working with children and books.

The National Centre for Australian Children's Literature (NCAACL) researched, identified and described over 340 culturally diverse books, created by Australians, between 1926 and 2018 for young people from early childhood through late secondary. We identified key concepts within each book. We judged books for their quality of writing and illustration, interesting content and readability by young people. Books are often described as 'mirrors and windows'. We found both reflected in this collection.

We see this collection of books by Australian authors and illustrators as contributing to a worldwide effort to highlight quality books of cultural diversity. Canada and North America have produced such lists, and the UK has such a project under way. Until now, Australia has not had such a resource.

Audience for this resource

The Cultural Diversity Database (CDD) will be useful for parents, caregivers, home schooling groups, teachers, librarians and others working with young people. It will be particularly useful to teachers addressing the Australian Curriculum and the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) in early learning centres, as well as others wishing to identify quality books on this topic. Young people too may use this resource for reading pleasure and school assignments. It is freely available from the NCAACL's website from 2019.

Scope and content

NCAACL sought authors and illustrators whose books featured diverse cultures where those within and outside the culture interact. Interactions provided valuable insights and understanding for characters, as well as readers. Often these books featured political issues, ideological perspectives, historical and religious movements over time and in various countries. Such stories enabled both the characters within books and readers of these books to 'walk in another's shoes', thus gaining an understanding of cultures different from their own.

The content of these 340 books varied widely. Some revealed people's experiences leaving one country and culture and settling into another. These experiences may be the character's or their relatives' experiences. Leaving, arriving and settling in Australia may or may not be presented as traumatic. Frequently, the historical reasons for leaving one homeland for a new one feature, adding depth and understanding of cultures around

tolerance for differences and demonstrated their understanding through empathy and compassion. Equally, characters showed disrespect and intolerance. The reader experiences through these books how cultures come to understand similarities and differences. Many of these books reveal characters' cultural diversity in the illustrations. This was especially the case in numerous picture books.

Not only is the collection culturally diverse, but also there is a wide range of storytelling genres and non-fiction presentations to engage and inform the reader. Included are picture books, nursery rhymes, plays, verse, short stories, graphic novels, historical fiction, fantasy, science fiction, allegories, memoirs, biographies, autobiographies, and non-fiction. Sometimes a mixture of these is present within a single book. Settings, time periods and cultural practices may be highly detailed and thus provide additional perspectives on characters' lives and their culture.

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the world. Some of these books presented stories of refugees and detention centres where characters fled an intolerable life in their homeland.

Many stories revealed vastly different beliefs while commonalities between cultures also arose. Included are books where cultures interact during local conflicts or participate in battles around the world. Characters displayed respect and

In telling their stories, authors and illustrators have used a wide variety of media to explore the content. These included photographs, postcards, relics, artefacts, historical records, interviews, diaries, posters, diagrams, maps, letters, glossaries, and extended material related to the story. Some stories used anthropomorphic animals to tell the story or various graphic novel techniques to explore the story, thus adding an extra storytelling technique.

As well, wide-ranging artistic styles and media featured in many of the books. This wide variety enables extended literary and artistic studies of storytelling techniques.

Expertise relating to the resources selected

We gathered the expertise to produce this list, including teachers, teacher librarians, researchers, and academics with knowledge of Australian children's literature, literacy, and English as an Additional Language/Dialect (EAL/D).

Examining books

The NCACL receives donations of the majority of Australian children's books published. Our collection includes books published since the 1940s and earlier, so we have been able to personally examine most books. We hold a large research collection of material about Australian children's books, which provided additional viewpoints. For each book chosen, we have written an annotation and identified their key concepts within the scope of 'cultural diversity'. We discussed the scope and content of the database with a sample of teachers, teacher librarians, literacy and literature experts, academics and staff at the ACT Directorate of Education. Their comments helped to refine the choice of materials, features to include and how these might be searched.

Sources searched to identify books

In addition to our advantage of having direct access to books, we also used a wide range of sources to identify potential books from the earliest to the most recent publications. Sources checked include:

- Amnesty International UK Blogs/Stories & Rights <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/blogs/stories-rights/childrens-picture-books-and-human-rights>

- AustLit: the Australian Literature Resource online database <https://www.austlit.edu.au>
- Australian Multicultural Children's Literature Award (1991–1995)
- Children's Book Council of Australia *Notable Books* (1990–)
- Children's Peace Literature Awards (1997–)
- Ena Noel Australian IBBY Encouragement Award for Children's Literature for a young developing Australian writer or illustrator (Biennial 1994–)
- 'Give Me Shelter' book list including identity, belonging, conflict, migrant and refugee experiences chosen by Centre for Literacy in Primary Education (UK)
- International Board on Books for Young People Australia (IBBY) Honour Books, annual <https://ibbyaustralia.wordpress.com/honour-list/> (1962–)
- International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) annual lists of Australian children's books included in *The White Ravens: A Selection of International Children's and Youth Literature* (2008–)
- International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY), International Children's Digital Library — White Ravens 1993–2007 <http://www.childrenslibrary.org/servlet/WhiteRavens>
- *The Source*, online subject guide to children's literature: books, short stories, traditional literature and poetry from around the world with an emphasis on Australian and New Zealand literature <https://www.magpies.net.au/the-source/>
- White, Kerry *Australian Children's Books: A Bibliography: Volume Two 1973–1988*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1992

- White, Kerry *Australian Children's Books: A Bibliography: Volume Three 1989–2000*, Miegunyah Press, Carlton, 2004
- White, Kerry *Australian Children's Fiction: The Subject Guide* Milton, Qld: Jacaranda Wiley, 1993
- White, Kerry *Australian Children's Fiction: The Subject Guide Update*, Jacaranda Wiley, Milton, Qld, 1996
- Prime Minister's Awards for Children's and Young Adult Books (2010–)
- Refugee Council of Australia <https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/getfacts/international/journeys/maps-plus/books/>

Searching the Cultural Diversity Database

Each book in the database includes the following searchable items: author, illustrator, title, series, publisher, year of publication, key concepts, audience, Australian National Curriculum codes, the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and annotations about the individual books.

Exclusions

UNESCO has declared 2019 as the 'Year of Indigenous Languages'. Resources permitting, the NCACL plans to create a database which identifies books by and about Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. Therefore, these resources are generally not included within this Cultural Diversity Database.

Key concepts

Key concepts identified for each book reflect the subjects and keyword terms used in online catalogues, databases and existing bibliographies related to cultural diversity. Several key concepts, as listed to follow, are identified for each book.

asylum seekers
 celebrations
 conflict
 cross cultural relations
 cultural traditions
 detention centres
 emigrants
 emigration
 empathy
 family
 friendship
 history
 hope
 immigrants
 immigration
 intolerance
 kindness
 language
 loss
 migrants
 migration
 peace
 race relations
 racial conflict
 racial identity
 racism
 refugees
 relationships
 resilience
 respect
 social justice
 social life
 tolerance
 war