

Racial Justice Text Tool

Adapted from Teaching Tolerance's Reading Diversity Tool and Teaching For Change's Selecting Anti-Bias Books

Title: _____ Author: _____ Race/Ethnicity of Author: _____

1. Does the author's identity match the identities of the main main characters, speakers, or narrators?	Yes	No
2. Consider the author's attitudes, beliefs, and point of view. Does the author promote inclusion and equality in their personal actions?	Yes	No
3. Does the text accurately reflect the lived experiences in terms of setting, characters, speakers, events, language and illustrations without relying on stereotypes, generalizations, or misrepresentations? (Note: A text may address a stereotype without relying on it.)	Yes	No
4. Consider the gaps and silences: Do traditionally marginalized identities have speaking roles and are integral to the story and/or character development?	Yes	No
5. Does this text mirror the identities, affinities, interests, and experiences of marginalized identities in the classroom?	Yes	No
6. Is the protagonist a person of color with supporting characters that are mostly people of color?	Yes	No
7. If the main characters are people of color, does the story address issues other than those directly related to race?	Yes	No
8. Consider the historical, social, and cultural context in which the text was written. Does this text connect with the interests and concerns of my students and is it relevant now?	Yes	No
9. Might this text be a window into the identities and experiences of people whose marginalized identities are different than my students' lives?	Yes	No
10. Does this text relate to and build upon the knowledge my students bring with them?	Yes	No
11. Does this text work toward goals within the four themes of ethnic studies? Identity: Promote formation and analysis of the intersection of identities. How identity shapes worldview/perspective. History: Developing an understanding of the history of historically underrepresented groups with or without interaction with the dominant/colonial society. Legacy of Oppression: Identify types of oppression (Institutional, political, legal, cultural, economic, custom, etc.) and the creation and persistence of racism, discrimination, & prejudice. Resistance/Perseverance/Triumph- Exploration of individual and/or group strategies for undermining, combating, and overcoming oppression. Taking Action/ Democratic Pluralism- An understanding and appreciation of successful and unsuccessful movements working toward "Liberty and Justice for All".	Yes	No
12. Does this text challenge the Eurocentric Narrative?	Yes	No
13. Does the text avoid racially loaded/coded words? (Note: A text may include this language, especially primary sources. The language should be used to counter the Master Narrative or critically engage in a discussion about the problematic use of this language in its perpetuation of the Master Narrative.)	Yes	No
14. Do the identities of the characters contribute to diverse reading experiences?	Yes	No
15. Does your scope and sequence include other texts that challenge the Eurocentric Narrative"?	Yes	No
16. How might this text motivate, engage, or enable my students?		
17. I will use this text in my instruction to [indicate task]		
18. I will not use this text in my instruction because [indicate reason]		

Your role as an educator includes your professional judgement and discretion. This tool was designed to assist in reviewing and selecting material for classroom use. It is imperative in this time of globalization and divisive politics that we strengthen our critical thinking skills and engage in critical reflection about the tools and resources we use to educate our students. It is integral to our role as educators to challenge the Eurocentric Narrative and center our work and resources around the identities and lives of historically marginalized communities and thus the communities we serve.

In addition to using this tool, what steps will you take to educate yourself on your own biases? This tool is only as useful as your understanding of yourself.

If you answered, “No,” to any question please reflect using these guiding questions:

- What is the overall goal or purpose in using this text? What is your rationale in choosing this text?
- How will you contextualize the learning?
- What will you do to continue to challenge the Master Narrative?
- How does this text contribute to or detract from messages or themes of equity?
- What resources and action plan will you implement to intentionally teach about or remedy the deficits of your chosen text?

KEY TERMS

Marginalized Identities - identities that regularly experience discrimination and oppression (non-white racial and ethnic identities, non-Christian religious identities, LGBTQ identities, etc.)

Eurocentric Narrative - history that positions European history and values as normal and superior to others whether implicitly or explicitly

Text - any media that educators use to inform students, including print text, digital text, video, music, podcasts, etc.

PROMPTS DEFINED

1. People of color deserve the space to tell their own stories not just for authenticity, but for the benefit of engaging in discourse centered through the known experiences of people of color. This is vital to counter former and current power structures which means taking ownership of our stories and not choosing texts from the dominant perspective/narrative to the exclusion of texts from people of color. People of color have been telling and writing their own stories forever, and it is necessary to reflect that in our teaching and instruction.

2. Choose with the intention to eradicate the misrepresentations, generalizations, and stereotypes of people of color. If the author is known to have problematic views and/or engage in problematic behaviors, this could present in their work.

3. “We need diverse books because they reflect the world as it is not the way the world never was and the way the world never will be.” - Amiri Baraka, author, poet, political activist

4. See above. “Stories make us human.”- Amiri Baraka, author, poet, political activist

5. We need texts that advance the understanding and belief that all identities have agency and that what is not said is as important as what is said.

6. Students should see themselves reflected in the narratives they encounter in their classrooms. This promotes a sense of belonging and identity safety.

7. The text should portray people of color in everyday situations where their race is not the focal point of the story, but seen as another layer of their experience.

8. We need current texts that our students can relate to in our rapidly

changing world. Keep up with the youth! Student engagement is increased the more they can make connections with their learning. Teachers can demonstrate respect for their students’ lived realities through careful consideration of chosen materials.

9. A “window” into the experiences and lives of others is a way for people who don’t share those experiences to begin to build empathy in service of moving toward acting against oppression. It can also be a way to educate one’s own understanding of their positionality in systems of power and oppression without relying on the emotional labor of oppressed people to explain it. Using perspectives from oppressed identities can enable educators to teach about a topic they cannot understand without trying to take ownership of the narrative.

10. In what ways does this text connect to the lived experiences of students in a culturally relevant and responsive way? Is the text building on the cultural wealth students bring into the classroom? Educators must also be aware of the Narratives many students bring with them into the classroom. How does the text or supplemental text challenge or support these Narratives?

11. These themes were utilized to help create ethnic studies standards. Texts should be selected with the goal of covering all five themes in a year-long scope and sequence. Individual texts should cover at least one theme and meet that theme’s goal.

Examples:

Identity - *I am Jazz*

History- *All American Boys*

Resistance - *Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution*

Taking Action - *A is for Activist*

12. Ways in which a text can challenge the Eurocentric Master Narrative is to center the experiences and perspectives of people of color who have agency over their own lives; texts are written by the person whose identity is being written about; challenges stereotypes; directly refutes the Master Narrative. Texts should encourage students to create their own counter narratives instead of relying on the perspectives of the classroom teacher.

13. Some examples of racially coded language are: thug, terrorist, illegal alien, “sketchy” neighborhoods, “ghetto,” etc. When texts use racial epithets, like the N word, educators should use their judgment in measuring the maturity and readiness of the students. The educator should also reflect on their own ability to facilitate discussions around emotionally charged language. When in doubt, leave it out.

14. In order to decenter whiteness, the main characters should be people of color and/or people with multiple identities, like Afro-Latinx, Black trans and queer people, people of color who are differently abled or cognitively divergent, etc.

15. There is danger in the single narrative. It is necessary that we challenge history that positions European history and values as normal and superior to others whether the text does this implicitly or explicitly. So, does the text have the potential to inspire students of color or is the text a complement to another in which the contrast between the two promotes discussion and reflection.