Evaluation and Selection Criteria for Children’s and Young Adult Fiction

STORY & CHARACTER

● Does the story have a narrative strong enough to keep readers engaged? (Mallett, 2010, pg. 26) Will the plot be appealing to the intended audience?
● Will the story entertain, stimulate, surprise, intrigue, or reassure young readers? (Mallett, 2010, pg. 26)
● What is the theme? Is it well-communicated and worth communicating?
● Does the story present a real-life challenge for readers to engage with?
● Can the story lead to a discussion between readers?
● Will the characters connect with readers? Are the characters believable, relatable, and/or admirable?
● Does the story result in character development and growth?
● Will the story help to expand the reader’s understanding and awareness?
● Is the plot original and appealing?
● Is the setting distinct and interesting?
● Does the story (including text and/or images) reinforce stereotypes? Consider depictions of race, gender, sexuality, ability, class, and age.
● With regard to power and ideology:
  ○ Whose story is told? From whose point of view? (From Short, K.G. in Johnson, et al., 2017, pg. 11).
  ○ Which characters have power and agency? How is this treated or examined by the author? (From Short, K.G. in Johnson, et al., 2017, pg. 11).
  ○ Is a specific ideology presented, either explicitly or implicitly? What impact could this have on readers? (From Bradford, C. in Johnson, et al., 2017, pg. 26).

LANGUAGE

● Is language used to add depth, richness, and imagery to the story?
● Does it express feeling in a way that would connect emotionally with the intended readers?
● Does the language communicate well the story’s mood? Is language used to effectively build excitement and tension?
● Is humor incorporated to add to the level of engagement? Is humor incorporated without reinforcing stereotypes, “othering,” or demeaning?
● Is the reading level and complexity of language suited to the intended reader? Will it challenge young readers without being inaccessible to them?

ILLUSTRATION & TEXT

● Does the cover convey well what the book is about? Will it appeal to the intended audience and encourage readers to pick it up?
● Is the text clear, appropriately sized, and readable?
● Are illustrations used to enhance and add life to the story?
● Do the illustrations align well with the text?

CONNECTIONS TO CURRICULUM

● Can the story be used to support at least one of the core competencies from the BC curriculum (Communication, Creative Thinking, Critical Thinking, Positive Personal & Cultural Identity, Personal Awareness & Responsibility, Social Responsibility)?
● Does it reinforce at least one Big Idea from the BC curriculum?
REFERENCES & FURTHER READING
For more information regarding the evaluation of fiction for young readers, please see the following resources:


You can find more information sources on this topic at the UBC Library, by using search terms including: “children’s literature” AND evaluat* “children’s literature” AND “history & criticism” “children’s literature” AND “study & teaching” “juvenile fiction” AND evaluat* “juvenile fiction” AND “history & criticism” “juvenile fiction” AND “study & teaching” children AND “books & reading”

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