

# Stories That Transform Teachers: The Use of Fiction Across Teacher Education Programs



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# The Primary Participants—Co-autoethnographers

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# CONTEXT: SUNY-Potsdam



	White	*African American/ Black		Native American	Hispanic	Asian American	Not Identified
Faculty	<b>362</b>	<b>3*</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>n/a</b>
Students	<b>4286</b>	<b>219</b>		<b>36</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>244</b>

# SUNY Potsdam & Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

The Potsdam Pledge

**SUNY Potsdam strives to be:**

A Diverse Community-  
celebrating our differences  
and learning from our  
diversity

The Potsdam Graduate

**The Potsdam faculty believes that:**

An educated person is one who can thrive and provide leadership in our complex, ambiguous and mutable world. We seek to graduate scholars as citizens of the world.

# Objectives

Given this context

- To “practice what we preach” in terms of reflective practice and collaboration
- To understand how our professional and personal selves intersect and affect pedagogy through the use of fiction
- To find ways of extending our students’ understanding about diversity and difference as they become “self examiners”

# Guiding Questions

1. What are our stories as teacher educators using integrated fiction?
2. What specific strategies do we consider most effective?
3. What are our challenges?
4. What is the significance of our work?

# Methodology

## 1. Reflective Practice & Self Study

- Qualitative, biographical tradition, using auto-ethnography/self study allows for optimum exploration of issues (Samaras 2011)
- Narratives of 4 teacher educators from diverse cultural backgrounds and across teacher education programs (Loughran, 2007)

## 2. Narrative Inquiry

- The personal narratives provide a value for the construction, interpretation, and valuing of selves as learners and teachers, allowing for reflection and learning from each other (Kitchen, 2009)

# Data Sources

## 1. Self study

- Personal narratives
- Course outlines –strategies for student engagement with fiction
- Exit interviews /surveys from students

## 2. Narrative Inquiry

- Secondary sources - samples of fiction utilized in course work
- Students' responses to fiction

Developing self-study narratives in  
response to key questions



Analysis of self-study narratives , categorizing  
codes, developing themes .



Agreement on Emergent Themes



Significance of Themes



Connections with the Literature Review



Implications

# Fiction defined

“Narratives about characters trying to overcome problems or deal with difficulty. They are often described as ‘waking dreams’ that people use to find meaning in their lives”.

(Tompkins 2010, p.290,)

# What the Research Says

Transformative qualities of stories and storytelling:

- Potential to unmask for readers' and listeners' aspects of life that often go unnoticed (Thein et al, 2007)
- Extension of students' understanding as self-examiners. (Encisco, 1997)
- Engagement of students in critical literacy (Rosenblatt, 1995)
- Understanding what it is to be an outsider or a member of a minority group (Clifford & Kalyanpur, 2011)
- Biblio-therapeutic (Crago, 1999)

# On Using Fiction-Our Stories



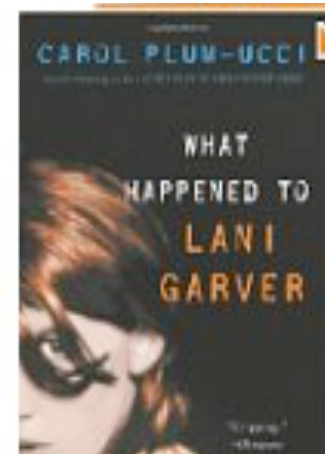
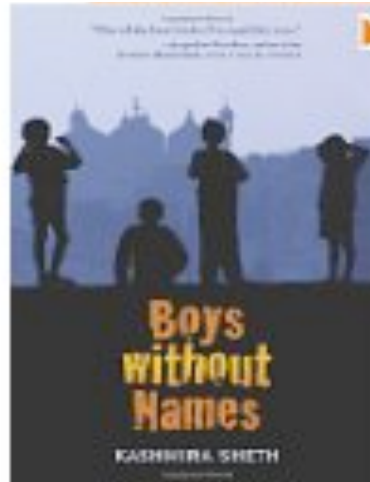
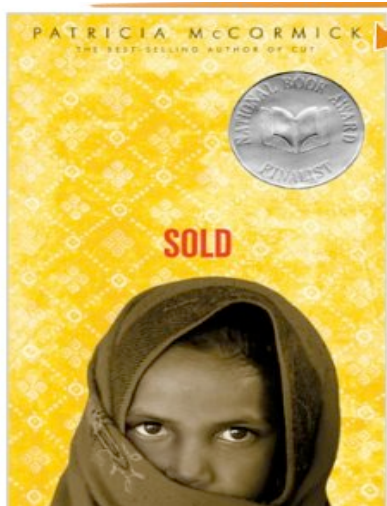
# Background Influences

- Early readers , exposure to multiple genres including indigenous fiction during our early childhood reading experiences
- Experienced the use of literature in graduate course work
- Concern that indigenous authors were often silenced in a legacy of colonialism
- Emphasis on immigrant identity, second language learners and inclusive learners

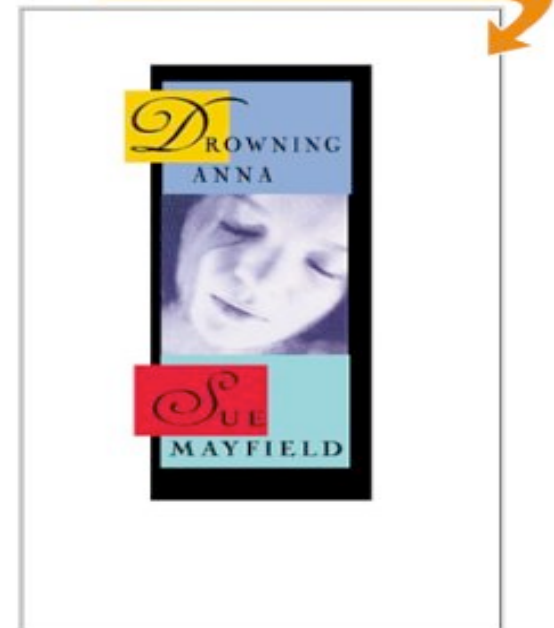
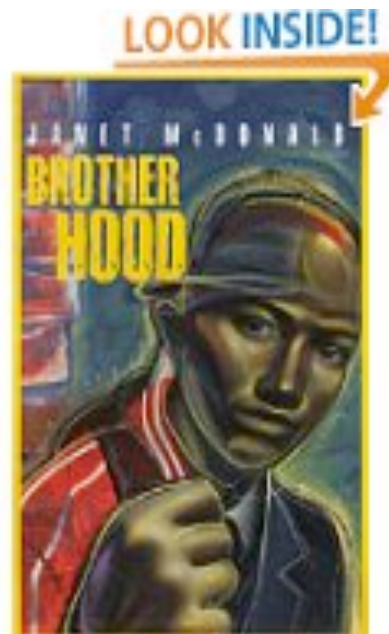
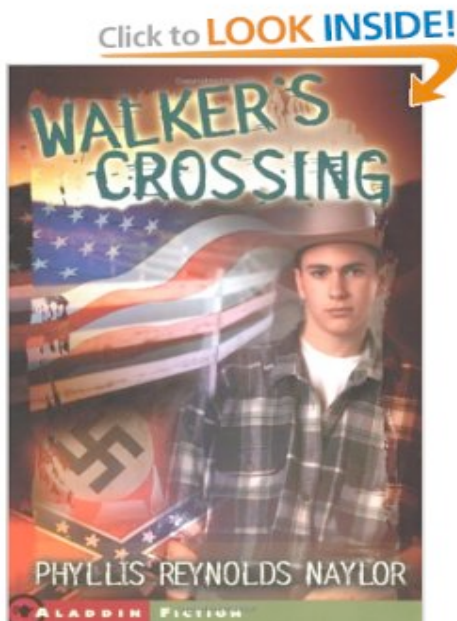
# Activities & Assessments

- Literature Circles
- Literature Logs
- Critical Written Responses
- Creative Responses
- Entrance & Exit Surveys
- Read Aloud/Dramatic Reading
- Checklists/ Rubrics

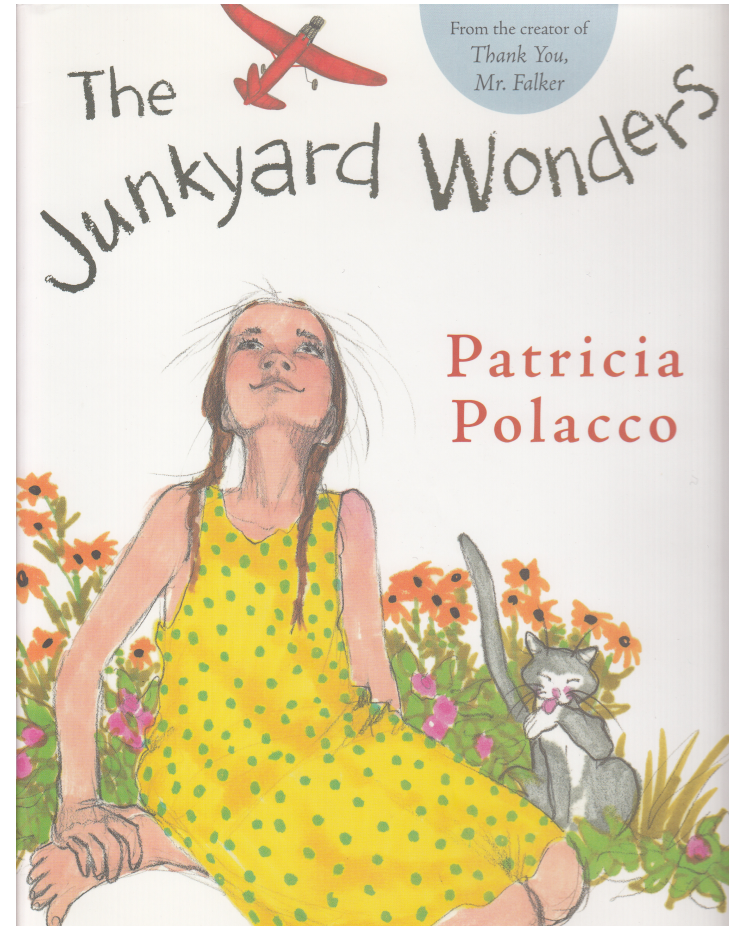
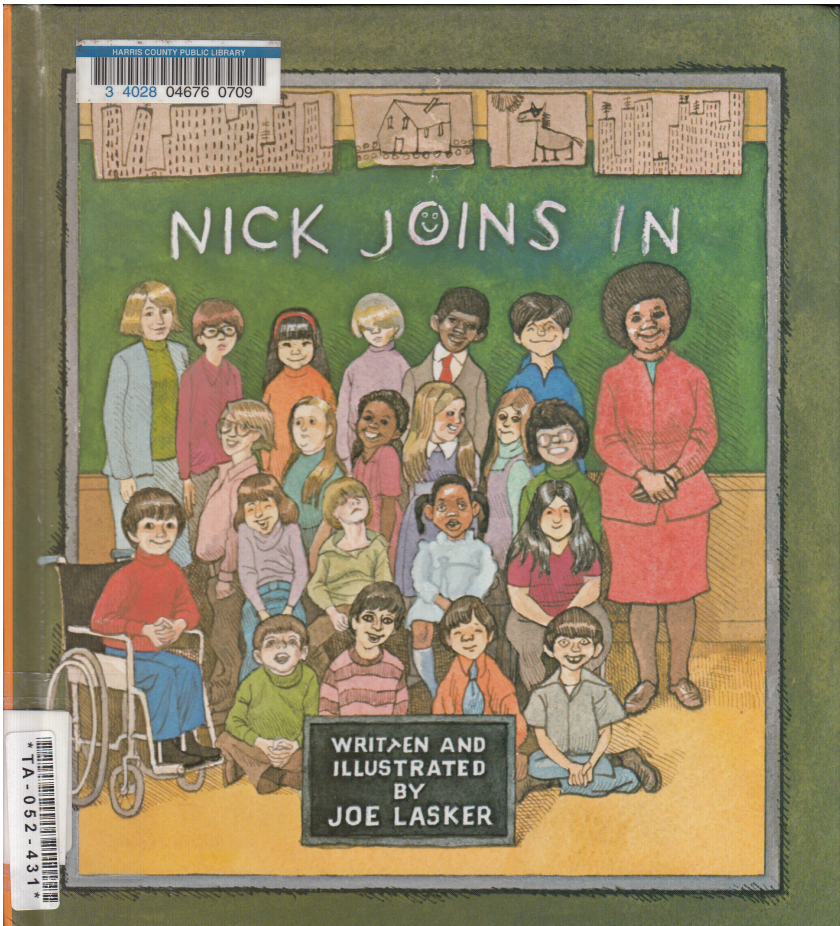
# Culturally Responsive Fiction



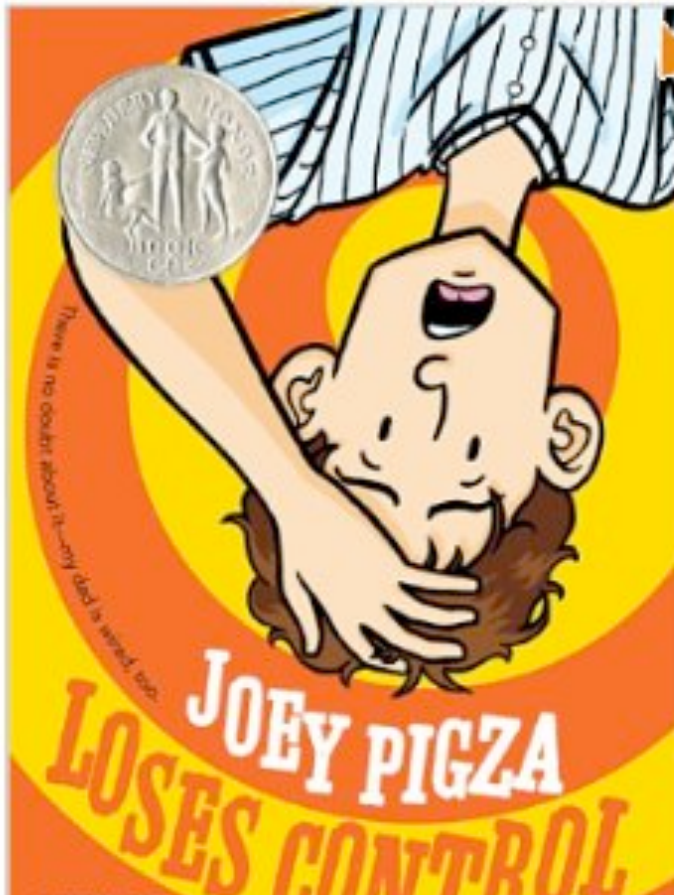
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# Ableism



**Ableism occurs when, as a result of stereotypical social beliefs and attitudes, people with disabilities are ignored, devalued or misrepresented in media (Haller, 2010).**



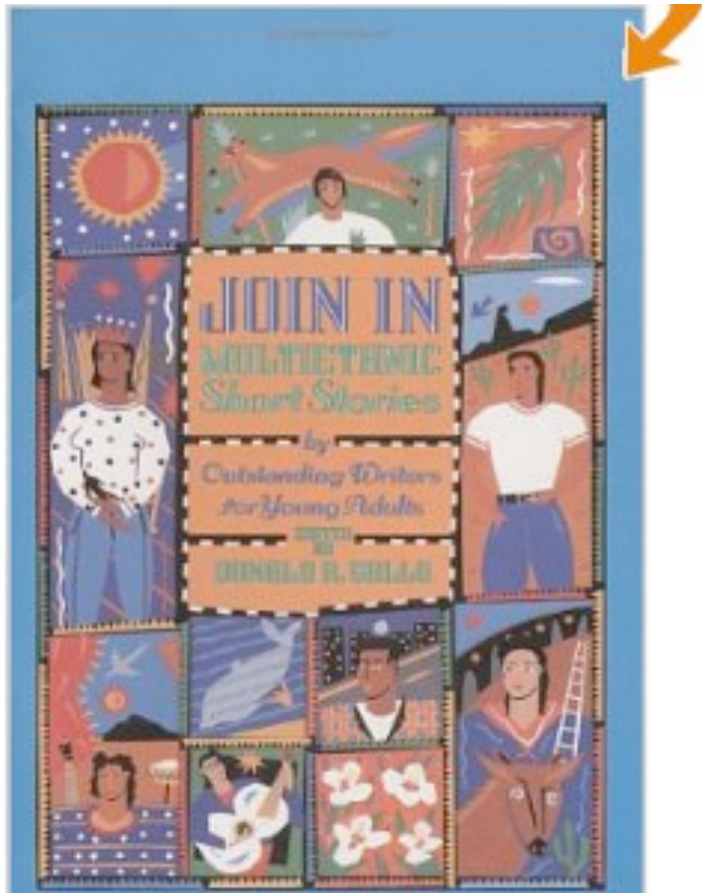
Working with students having emotional & behavioral difficulties revealed a need for students to broaden their experiences...through the use of fiction.

# Literature Circle Groups



Students engage in exploring fiction through collaboration and thoughtful discussions.

# Creative Responses



# Challenges

- Meeting professional and state standards for beginning teachers
- Not silencing students with one's personal belief system and privilege
- Creating a library of appropriate books for students that has relevance to their future roles as teachers
- Resistance from students –increasing course work, how related to final grade or certification exams

# Significance

We seek to:

- facilitate reflective practice for us as teacher educators as well as our students
- model what we preach in terms of respect for cultural differences and social action
- promote inclusive classroom climate and culturally responsive pedagogy among our students.