

ABSTRACT

"I will not look at books the same way again": Teachers' Opinions About the Use of Caribbean Children's Literature

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The espoused views of the Jamaican educational establishment of the importance of the child's culture is in contradiction to the lack of Caribbean children's literature in the nation's primary school classrooms. A review of the literature indicates the importance of indigenous children's literature to the child's development. In this study, the researcher, using a qualitative approach, did a case study which examined the opinions of two trained teachers in an urban primary school concerning the use of Caribbean children's literature. The researcher used a process of semi structured interviews with the teachers, as well as participant observation of their use of both Caribbean and non Caribbean children's literature with their students.

The findings indicate that the teachers have had very little exposure to children's literature in general, and Caribbean children's literature in particular. Nonetheless, they were able to articulate and demonstrate the strategies they consider important to motivate their students when using children's literature. In addition, their perspective on children's literature is closely linked to its use for motivating children to read and to practice reading. Making connections between the stories and the rest of the curriculum is also seen as important.

Upon exposure to the Caribbean children's literature provided by the researcher, the teachers were able to identify for the students the relevance between the material and the children's experiences. The teachers expressed enthusiasm for the material, and could articulate the values of such material for their students, including the validation of their lives as Caribbean children. The findings also indicate the importance of quality packaging of the material, in particular the use of colourful illustrations. In addition, the research demonstrates the effect of the research process on the participants, in itself a finding of interest, as it may well speak to exposure. These findings should be of significance to educators and policy makers at all levels of the system.

Keywords: Marguerite Diane Browne; Diane Browne; Caribbean children's literature; relevance of indigenous children's literature; images of self in children's literature; effect of the curriculum on the use of children's literature; effect of research process in children's literature study.