

Children's Stories and Cultural Learning

Children's stories have many social meanings which we adopt from an early age. Jerome C. Harst defines social meanings as "social, historical, and cultural forces" (Harst, 2003). We use stories to define who we are, how we perceive ourselves and others, and how we conduct ourselves in our society. Using stories to shape reality occurs in all societies and cultures whether they are here in the U.S. or in other countries.

Stories, including oral retellings, are one of the basic and fun ways we communicate. Learning about different cultures and countries can be done through those children's stories. It shows the cultural and gender norms of that culture/country and creates basic images of that society.

Here at the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology, we try to re-create this in our Storytime Corner during the Cultural Expo. Along with our community partner, International Students, Inc. and our students, we try to give visitors another avenue to learn about cultures/countries that are different from what we know. It also gives visitors a chance to ask questions to a native of that culture/country.

We hope that you will consider using this valuable resource at the Cultural Expo to help your students understand more about the world in a fun and creative way.

For more research on storytelling and why it matters for cultural learning and literacy, please read the various documents:

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Gray, P. (October 11, 2014). One More Really Big Reason to Read Stories to Children. *Psychology Today*. Retrieved from: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/freedom-learn/201410/one-more-really-big-reason-read-stories-children>

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Mann, M. (September 7, 2015). 25 Children's Books to Teach Your Kids Meaningful Values. *GOODNET*. Retrieved from: <https://www.goodnet.org/articles/25-childrens-books-that-teach-kids-meaningful-values>

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