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Culturally Relevant Books: Connecting Hispanic Students to the Curriculum

Alma Dolores Rodríguez, Ed.D.

Abstract/Resumen

Minority students in the United States (US) need to connect with the curriculum in order to have a meaningful schooling experience. This paper promotes the integration of culturally relevant books into the bilingual and English as a second language (ESL) curriculum for Hispanic English language learners (ELLs). A study was conducted with bilingual and ESL pre-service teachers who learned about the benefits of using culturally relevant books in their teacher preparation program. Pre-service teachers realized that culturally relevant books connect Hispanic ELLs to the curriculum and engage them in reading. Through the study, participants gained confidence working with ELLs and expressed a desire to use culturally relevant books in their teaching.

Las minorías en los Estados Unidos necesitan establecer una conexión con el currículo para que su experiencia educativa sea significativa. Este artículo propone la integración de libros culturalmente relevantes en el currículo bilingüe y de inglés como segunda lengua para los aprendices de inglés hispanos. Se realizó un estudio con futuros maestros bilingües

y de inglés como segunda lengua quienes recibieron instrucción en la universidad sobre los beneficios de usar libros culturalmente relevantes. Los futuros maestros corroboraron que los libros culturalmente relevantes establecen una conexión entre los alumnos hispanos y el currículo, y que promueven una participación activa en la lectura. Por medio del estudio, los participantes adquirieron confianza al trabajar con aprendices de inglés y expresaron el deseo de usar libros culturalmente relevantes en su enseñanza.

Keywords/Palabras claves: culturally relevant books, Hispanic English language learners, bilingual teacher preparation; libros culturalmente relevantes, aprendices de inglés hispanos, formación de maestros bilingües

Introduction

The US has a growing number of English language learners (ELLs). The 2000 census reported that the number of speakers of languages other than English increased 47% during the 1990s, and that about 6 in 10 speakers of languages other than English speak Spanish (Crawford, 2002). The US Census Bureau projected that the Latino population would account for 24.4% of the total US population by the year 2050 (Nieto & Bode, 2008). Although all regions of the US are experiencing demographical changes, some areas experience a greater increase in cultural and language diversity. For example, Hodgkinson (2007) projected that states such as California, Florida and Texas would receive about 65% of the increase in diverse populations. In the state of Texas alone, about 47% of the more than 4.5 million students is Hispanic. The number of Hispanic students in Texas surpassed the number of White non-Hispanic students in the 2001-2002 school year (TEA, 2009). In South Texas, close to the US-Mexico border, about 97% of the total student population is Latino and about 39% are ELLs (Region One ESC, 2008). Therefore, bilingual and ESL pre-service teachers must be prepared to address the needs of ELLs in US schools. In addition to acquiring effective teaching practices, bilingual and ESL pre-service teachers must learn how to select and develop appropriate materials for ELLs.

This paper proposes the incorporation of culturally relevant texts into the curriculum for Hispanic ELLs. First, an overview of bilingual and ESL curriculum is given, followed by a definition of culturally relevant books, their characteristics and their benefits as outlined by current literature. Second, the results of a study which analyzed the perceptions of a group of bilingual and ESL pre-service teachers regarding the use of culturally relevant books with Hispanic ELLs is described. The method section of the paper begins with the purpose of the study, followed by

a description of the participants and the context in which the study was conducted. Subsequently, the procedure is explained, followed by a description of the results of the study organized by research questions. Finally, a discussion of the results is provided organizing the results into five major findings.

Bilingual and ESL Curricula

Krashen (2000) explains that there are three components of effective bilingual programs: (1) content area instruction in the native language, which serves as background knowledge to facilitate English comprehension; (2) literacy instruction in the native language, which transfers to English; and (3) a strong ESL component to provide comprehensible input in English, which is supplemented with sheltered instruction in the content areas as students become more proficient in English. It is important to note that the amount and duration of native language instruction varies among different bilingual program models. Long-term enrichment bilingual programs provide more native language instruction than short-term early-exit programs.

Research has favored enrichment bilingual programs such as late-exit and dual-language programs as being the most effective (Collier, 1992; Ramirez, Yuen & Ramey, 1991; Rolstad, Mahoney, & Glass, 2005; Thomas & Collier, 2002, 2003). Cummins (2000) provides the principles that underlie enrichment bilingual programs: (1) the development of two languages for extended periods benefits students cognitively and academically; (2) the knowledge and skills acquired in one language transfer to the other language; and (3) academic language takes more than 5 years to develop in contrast with social language, which develops in 1 to 3 years.

Although there is no doubt that effective bilingual programs work well (Krashen & McField, 2005), educational workers should always strive to improve educational programs. Krashen (2000) proposes that in order to improve bilingual programs, educators must increase the number of books in bilingual classrooms. It is important to provide students with books both in English and in their native language since enrichment bilingual education has two goals: development of academic English and heritage language development. The development of academic English is accomplished through effective ESL instruction.

ESL, either as a stand-alone program or as a component of a bilingual program, is intended to provide ELLs with instruction to develop academic English language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing (Freeman & Freeman, 2007). Reading literature in English helps ELLs develop English language proficiency when such literature provides comprehensible input (Krashen, 2004). On the other hand,

literature in the students' native language is needed to meet the second goal of enrichment bilingual programs, heritage language development. Exposing students to literature in both languages fosters the development of biliteracy resulting in academic and cognitive benefits for ELLs (Cummins, 2000).

In addition, ELL curricula should be learner-centered and should value and respect students' languages and cultures (Freeman & Freeman, 2007). Nevertheless, Cummins (2000) states that traditionally, language minority students have experienced "coercive relations of power" in American schools (p. 9). That is, they have a lower status than members of the dominant group. He calls for a shift in the curricula that would empower ELLs to have a voice and to take ownership of their learning. Gay (2007) states that diverse students benefit from a curriculum that is meaningful and familiar. She adds that curricula should be relevant to students to promote engagement and interest. Minority students find the curriculum relevant when they can connect with the topics addressed and with materials such as the literature used in the classroom (Hunsberger, 2007). However, Ada (2000) states that the books most commonly found in bilingual classrooms do not reflect the identities of ELLs, their families or their communities. Therefore, it is important that educators provide ELLs not only with an increased number of books in their native language and in English, but with books that are culturally relevant to the students.

Culturally Relevant Books

Freeman and Freeman (2004) explain that culturally relevant books go beyond being written in the students' native language. As a matter of fact, they may even be written in English. Culturally relevant books do not only display the cultural heritage of students, and they are not the same as *multicultural* books. Culturally relevant books are directly related to ELLs' lives. Books are culturally relevant when there are similarities between the characters and students with their families, and when there are relationships between the students' experiences and those told in the stories. Books are also culturally relevant when students are familiar with the places mentioned in the stories and when they deal with contemporary themes. Characters also contribute to making a book relevant when the student's gender matches that of the main character and when there is an approximation between the main character's and the student's age. Finally, books are culturally relevant for ELLs when the language used by the characters resembles the language used by students. That is, culturally relevant books contain familiar phrases or figures of speech.

There are many reasons why bilingual and ESL teachers should incorporate culturally relevant books into the curriculum. Freeman and

Freeman (2004) state that culturally relevant books allow students to comprehend the text better and help students decode more accurately because they are familiar with the material presented by the author. Alanís (2007) emphasizes the importance of background knowledge in reading comprehension and states that culturally relevant books help activate it. Feger (2006) states that culturally relevant books increase students' desire to read. She adds that students have better opportunities to explore their own identities when reading culturally relevant texts. Another good reason to use culturally relevant books is that they improve and promote a healthy relationship between home and school (Packard, 2001). In addition, Ada (1987) and Cummins (2000, 2009) encourage teachers to engage ELLs in critical literacy to empower them. Culturally relevant books facilitate critical literacy since students have background knowledge that allows them to interpret the material, to question the validity of the ideas and to positively impact their lives. In other words, culturally relevant books empower language minority students (Rodríguez, 2008).

Given the benefits that culturally relevant books have for ELLs, it is of great importance to expose bilingual and ESL pre-service teachers to this type of book and to encourage them to integrate culturally relevant books into the bilingual and ESL curriculum once they start teaching. Therefore, a two-part study was conducted to identify the perceptions of bilingual and ESL pre-service teachers and Hispanic ELLs towards culturally relevant books.

Method

Purpose

The first part of the study described in this article focuses on the following research question: What are the perceptions of bilingual and ESL pre-service teachers regarding culturally relevant books? The study consisted of (1) determining the ability of pre-service bilingual and ESL teachers to identify culturally relevant books for Hispanic ELLs, (2) to identify their perceptions about the usefulness of culturally relevant books to provide instruction to Hispanic ELLs, and (3) to determine their willingness to incorporate culturally relevant books into the bilingual and ESL curriculum once they would start teaching. Another part of the study, not detailed in this article, examined the perceptions of young Hispanic ELLs towards culturally relevant books read by pre-service teachers.

Participants

This study was conducted at a university located in southern Texas, very close to the US-Mexico border. Due to its geographical location, the institution serves students from both sides of the border. The community surrounding the university is predominantly Hispanic as

is the university student population. Bilingualism is very common in the area. Many students who attend this university do not fit the typical American college student profile. Many students are married and have children (Sutterby, Ayala & Murillo, 2005). Therefore, a great number of students work full-time jobs to support their families while they pursue their college education.

This study was conducted with a group of 22 juniors and seniors ($N = 22$) who all are pursuing a degree in either bilingual or ESL education. Participants were working towards certification by the State of Texas to teach in elementary bilingual or ESL settings. All but one of the participants was Hispanic, and all were female.

Procedure

Participants were enrolled in a course that introduced the foundations of bilingual and ESL education. The objectives of the course included familiarization with bilingual and ESL programs, understanding language acquisition, and comprehending the concepts of bilingualism and biculturalism. Students enlisted in the course were taught second language teaching methods and were expected to identify and develop second language teaching materials. As part of the course, the students received instruction on culturally relevant books. Participants were exposed to the characteristics of this literature and received instruction on the benefits of exposing ELLs to it. They listened to lectures, viewed examples and participated in class discussions about the topic.

After completing training on the protection of human subjects, participants were asked to identify an ELL to work with. The child could be an acquaintance or family member. Subsequently, participants were asked to identify one book that would be culturally relevant for their chosen students. Participants were asked to use the following criteria to select their book: (1) similarities between the characters and the children with their families; (2) relationships between the children's experiences and those told in the stories; (3) children's familiarity with the places mentioned in the stories; (4) contemporary themes; (5) similarities between the age of the characters and the age of the children; and (6) similarities between the language used by the characters and the language used by the children.

Participants were asked to read the books to the ELLs, and have the children complete a cultural relevance rubric developed by A. Freeman (Paulson & Freeman, 2003) to determine if the books were indeed culturally relevant to them. The rubric was an 8-item questionnaire (Appendix). The questions pertained to how familiar the children were with the setting, events, language and experiences found in the book; as well as how similar the children were to the characters in the story.

The results of the cultural relevance rubric were computed by adding the scores of 7 of the 8 questions. The question that was left out did not indicate how relevant the story was; it asked children how often they read this type of story. Each question could be scored with a 4 (being the most relevant), 3, 2 or 1 (being not relevant at all). The highest possible combined score for the 7 questions was 28. The book was considered to be culturally relevant for the child if the score on the cultural relevance rubric was 20 or higher.

Pre-service teachers were also asked to write a reflective essay on their experience using the following focusing questions: (1) What is your overall impression of this activity? (2) In your opinion, how did the child respond/react to the book? (3) What is your opinion regarding culturally relevant books? And, (4) Do you plan to incorporate culturally relevant books in your teaching? Why? The use of standardized open-ended questions focused the participants' attention on certain topics of interest without limiting the possible responses (Patton, 1990).

A systematic textual analysis of participants' reflective essays was completed. The reflective essays were read to identify the sections that addressed each focusing question. Some participants chose to use the focusing questions as subtitles in their essays, but others did not. Once responses to the focusing questions were identified, the reflective essays were read a second time to segment the data. The data was segmented by focusing question. That is, the sections of all reflective essays pertaining to the first focusing question were segmented first. The same process was repeated for each of the focusing questions. Subsequently, a thematic analysis was conducted by focusing on repeated words, phrases and ideas. Conceptual mapping was used to organize the resulting themes (Grbich, 2007). The reflective essays were read a third time to identify disconfirming evidence or confirming evidence supporting the themes.

Results

Identification of Culturally Relevant Books

As was mentioned earlier, one of the purposes of the study was to determine the ability of bilingual and ESL pre-service teachers to identify culturally relevant books for Hispanic ELLs. All participants worked with Hispanic children whose ages ranged from 4 to 11. Most of the children (69%) were in bilingual or ESL programs, while 9% were in all-English classrooms. The type of instruction the remaining 22% of the students received was not reported. Books in Spanish were selected by 55% of participants, while 45% selected books in English. The culturally-relevant rubric completed by the ELLs revealed that 77% of pre-service teachers selected books that were culturally relevant. When participants were asked to state their perceptions of ELLs' responses to

the books, 96% of them indicated in their reflective essays that ELLs responded positively. Only 1 of the 22 participants did not feel the child responded positively to the selected book. She mentioned the child was impatient because the book was long. The participant realized the book was not appropriate for the child's age.

Pre-service Teacher Perceptions

The second purpose of this study was to identify bilingual and ESL pre-service teachers' perceptions about the benefits of culturally relevant books to provide instruction to Hispanic ELLs. Participants were asked to reflect on their opinions about culturally relevant books and on their experience reading a culturally relevant book to an ELL. Even though all participants indicated that culturally relevant books are useful and found the experience to be a positive one, they had different perceptions. The thematic analysis initially yielded 7 themes, which were later reduced to 5, as can be noted in Figure 1.

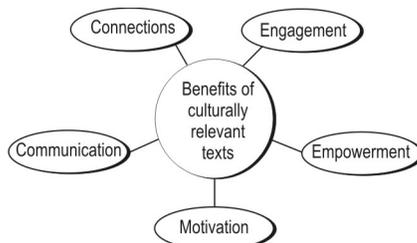


Figure 1. Benefits of culturally relevant texts as perceived by bilingual and ESL pre-service teachers.

The most salient theme was *connections*. Pre-service teachers perceived culturally relevant books to be beneficial because ELLs can connect with the reading material. More than 60% of participants used words such as *relate*, *identify*, *match*, and *similarities* repeatedly in their reflective essays. The word *connect* was used numerous times by participants as they explained that culturally relevant books “connect with the reader” and “connect with their experiences.” Participants noted that students were “comparing themselves to the characters and events of the story.” They also mentioned that culturally relevant books facilitated “learner-centered” instruction for Hispanic ELLs by “connecting text and life.” In addition, they emphasized that reading culturally relevant books helped Hispanic ELLs “learn about themselves.” The theme of connections included ideas that expressed how culturally relevant books “relate to students’ culture” as well as help them “keep and transmit their

traditions.” Participants also noted that because ELLs have “background knowledge” about the topics, settings and/or events in the books, they connect with the reading and comprehend the text better. This theme included all ideas that focused on how culturally relevant books are directly related to some aspect of students’ lives or cultures.

The second theme identified as a benefit of using culturally relevant books with Hispanic ELLs was *engagement*. Participants expressed in their reflective essays that students “had much to say,” that they were “involved” in the reading, were “asking questions” and “sharing experiences,” as well as “making predictions” as they were reading the books. All these ideas were grouped under engagement since they denote involvement in the reading activity. As was mentioned earlier, there had been two additional themes identified through the thematic analysis. One of those themes was *interest*. Ideas that composed this theme were that children were “paying attention,” “focused,” and “interested” in the books. Further examination of such ideas in the context in which they occurred led to the conclusion that when students are paying attention and/or are interested in a book they are engaged in the reading activity. Therefore, interest and engagement were merged into one theme: engagement.

The third benefit of culturally relevant books as perceived by pre-service teachers of ELLs was fostering *communication*. This theme was identified by grouping all ideas pertaining to how students “opened up” and how participants were able to “learn about students’ family life.” This theme included ideas that had originally been grouped as a separate theme: *caring*. Participants explained that ELLs feel that their “teachers care” about them when they read culturally relevant books. They also mentioned culturally relevant books help develop a “sense of warmth” that leads to students “feeling comfortable talking to the teacher about their problems.” Because these ideas were included in the reflective essays within the context of ELLs talking more about their lives with their teachers, the theme of caring was incorporated into the theme of fostering communication.

The last 2 benefits of culturally relevant books revealed by the thematic analysis were that culturally relevant books are useful to motivate and empower ELLs. In regards to the theme of *motivation*, participants mentioned that through culturally relevant books, ELLs would want to “read more” and to “produce good work.” Ideas such as “enhancing reading desire” and “attracting children to read” were found repeatedly in pre-service teachers’ reflective essays. In regards to the theme of *empowerment*, participants stated that culturally relevant books promote “equality.” This theme included ideas aligned with “elimination of discrimination,” and promoting “feelings of worth.”

Teacher Willingness

The third purpose of this study was to determine bilingual and ESL pre-service teachers' willingness to incorporate culturally relevant books into the curriculum. Even though all participants stated that they planned to use culturally relevant books when they would start teaching, they gave different reasons for their decision. The themes that came out of the thematic analysis of participants' reflective essays coincided with some of the previous themes: connections, engagement, motivation and communication. The most salient theme again was connections. Phrases such as "relate to daily lives," "relating to books," "their experiences" and "their own cultures" were repeated in more than half of the reflective essays within the context of why participants wanted to include culturally relevant books in the curriculum. The second theme, engagement, was identified when pre-service teachers expressed they would use culturally relevant books to "promote social interaction" and "promote discussion." Participants felt that by using culturally relevant books, ELLs would be more "engaged," "interested," and "involved" in class. Motivation and communication were 2 other reasons given by participants to use culturally relevant books.

It is important to note that when participants were asked about their perceptions regarding culturally relevant books and their willingness to use them in their teaching, *diversity* emerged as a theme as well. Participants mentioned they would use culturally relevant books because ELLs can appreciate "different cultures" or the "cultures of others." The thematic analysis identified phrases such as "every culture," "different cultures," and "other cultures" as components of this theme. Participants explained in their reflective essays that culturally relevant books help students "embrace every culture and learn from it (sic) to find similarities and differences with their own." This type of statement would apply more accurately to *multicultural* books as opposed to culturally relevant books.

Although the purpose of the study was to identify the benefits culturally relevant books had for ELLs as perceived by pre-service teachers, the thematic analysis revealed that participants felt the children were not the only ones who benefited. Almost half of the participants felt they benefited by gaining experience in working with an ELL. Words such as "witness" and "see" as well as phrases such as "interact one-on-one" and "personally experience the reaction of a child" were repeated often. Second, participants appreciated the exposure they got from culturally relevant books because they had not read similar texts in their childhood, even though they were Hispanic. One participant wrote,

This experience brought me a lot of knowledge about culturally relevant books. I was not aware of how interesting they were and how students can relate to them. I have read a few more books. . . and I enjoyed them, and I can even relate to those books. I am sure that if I, an adult, enjoy these books, children will enjoy them as well.

Discussion

This study was conducted in an attempt to discover bilingual and ESL pre-service teachers' perceptions on the use of culturally relevant books with Hispanic ELLs. The participants learned about culturally relevant books in one of their teacher preparation courses. Lecture and discussion were enhanced with an activity in which pre-service teachers had to select one culturally relevant book, read it to an ELL and record the students' responses to the book. The results of the study, discussed in the previous section, can be organized into 5 main findings:

Selecting Culturally Relevant Books for Hispanic ELLs

Various comments were made on this first finding, such as:

We learned the importance of choosing the right type of texts that children of different cultures can associate with to have a meaningful learning experience. To my surprise, determining which book to read was probably the toughest part of completing this project. Everything else just fell into place.

The results of this study showed that although 96% of participants considered they were able to identify appropriate culturally relevant books for the students they worked with, only 77% of ELLs rated the books as culturally relevant. Identifying culturally relevant books for a particular ethnic group is only the starting point for teachers. In order to meet the needs of ELLs, teachers must match the books they select to the specific characteristics of their individual students, as opposed to just considering the general characteristics of the ethnic group. Therefore, teachers of ELLs have to know their students well in order to select the most appropriate books for them.

Connecting to Hispanic ELLs through Culturally Relevant Books

This second finding is supported by the following comment, made by a participant:

[The child] would constantly compare the characters and events in the story to her family to the point that she asked, "Did you choose this book especially for me or what? Because there are

a lot of things in this book that look like if (sic) you are talking about my family.”

Another pre-service teacher said, “I am really interested in collecting books throughout the years to build a library that will benefit my students by presenting them with books they can relate to culturally.” When participants were asked about their perceptions regarding culturally relevant books and their willingness to use these books as teachers of ELLs, the most salient theme was that these books establish connections between the readings and students’ cultures. These perceptions were based on the participants’ first-hand observations of the students’ reactions as they were reading the selected books. One participant mentioned that the student “at several points during the reading... interrupted to share her brother’s and her own experiences when faced with similar situations as the story’s characters.” The connections children made between the books and their lives evidenced that their identities and cultures were being validated.

Engaging Hispanic ELLs in School Through Culturally Relevant Books

The author was enlightened with reference to the third finding when she read the following comment made by a participant of the study: “It was obvious that [the student] truly enjoyed the book. Not only did he remain focused throughout the reading but became involved with the story before, during, and after by asking questions...”

As they read culturally relevant books to ELLs, pre-service teachers had the opportunity to witness attentiveness and active participation on the part of the children. Participants observed that students were indeed engaged in the activity. A participant mentioned that the student “would predict what was going to happen next and was usually correct.” Another participant concluded that “culturally relevant books are good to keep students involved and interested in school.”

Gaining Confidence as Teachers of ELLs

Fourthly, statements were made by the participants as to their personal development as pedagogues:

I was a little bit nervous because you never know what to expect with children. I was under the impression that I was not going to do a good job; after this activity, however, I’m confident that I have the ability to work with kids.

As can be noted from the results of the study, bilingual and ESL pre-service teachers responded very positively to the activity. As pre-service teachers, they lacked experience working with students, which made them nervous at first. One participant stated, “I was stressing a little over this activity because I did not know what to expect.” Another one wrote, “I was nervous since I wanted to make sure it [the book] would be one that would interest him [the student].” Despite their insecurities, this group of pre-service teachers met their professor’s expectations. Participants enjoyed working first-hand with ELLs. Reading a book to a child allowed pre-service teachers to personally observe the reactions of students to culturally relevant books, which positively influenced their willingness to use these books when they would start teaching. One participant explained, “I had been exposed to these types of books because we used several ones in another of my classes, but now that I have put them into practice, I really enjoyed them and will use them in the future.”

Providing Learning Experiences They did not Have

Lastly, statements such as the following were made: “Knowing that I did not have these books when I went to elementary (school), I want to give my future students the opportunity to read them in class...” Two other participants stated:

I do not remember ever reading a book about Hispanics as a child... had I read [such] books... my self-esteem and self-image may have been so much higher... I am glad my child is able to read about others like her...

Being Mexican-American myself, I do not recall reading books that related to different customs and traditions from the Mexican culture. I would have liked to have read more books that made me remember my life... I’m sure that would have motivated me to read many books. Now, as a prospective educator, I want to provide the opportunity to my students...

It is important to emphasize that 96% of pre-service teachers participating in this study were Hispanic like the ELLs they worked with, which allowed them to appreciate how individuals can connect to culturally relevant books. A recurring theme commented on by participants was that they were not exposed to culturally relevant books as children. As Hispanic pre-service teachers they seemed to understand and relate to the needs of minority students. The project motivated bilingual and ESL pre-service teachers to enrich their students’ learning experiences through culturally relevant books.

Conclusion

The use of culturally relevant books is an effective strategy to provide instruction to ELLs (Feger, 2006; Freeman & Freeman, 2004; Freeman, Freeman & Freeman, 2003; Packard, 2001). Culturally relevant books allow teachers to connect to ELLs, as well as to promote their engagement in school. The results of this study show that bilingual and ESL pre-service teachers were able to appreciate the benefits of using culturally relevant books when selecting a book and reading it to a language minority student. The participants were able to apply the learning acquired in their college coursework and corroborate its effectiveness. They put theory into practice. Moreover, the results of the study show that participants were willing to implement the knowledge acquired in college into their teaching when given opportunities to work with students.

Pre-service teachers of ELLs need to become familiar with culturally relevant books and other quality literature appropriate for their students. By doing so, they will be able to connect ELLs to the curriculum and engage students in learning. Positively impacting the education of ELLs can be very rewarding, as it was for the participant who wrote, “I enjoyed reading to him as much as he enjoyed having a story read to him. Now every time I see him, he wants me to read him a book! I think this is wonderful...”

Appendix

| Cultural Relevance Rubric | | | |
|---|---|---|--------------------|
| 1. Are the characters in the story like you and your family? | | | |
| Just like us | | | Not at all like us |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 2. Have you ever lived in or visited places like those in the story? | | | |
| Yes | | | No |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 3. Could this story take place this year? | | | |
| Yes | | | No |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4. How close do you think the main characters are to you in age? | | | |
| Very close | | | Not close at all |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 5. Does the story have main characters who are boys (for boy readers)? Girls (for girl readers)? | | | |
| Yes | | | No |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 6. Do the characters talk like you and your family? | | | |
| Yes | | | No |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 7. How often do you read stories like this one? | | | |
| Often | | | Never |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 8. Have you ever had an experience like one described in this story? | | | |
| Yes | | | No |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

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