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Acclaimed Children's Literature as Global Resources

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Abstract

Acclaimed children's books in the United States (U.S.) may be utilized as resources to instruct global issues. As children's literature reflects social context and values, acclaimed books may provide curricular materials for those within the U.S. and to international audiences. Stakeholders, including librarians, teachers, national industry experts, and parents, are among those who review and award prizes to children's literature. This work has resulted in booklists teachers, families, and librarians use to guide their book purchasing and sharing practices. We investigate the histories, composition, and criteria for 22 award and acclaimed U.S. children's book lists containing 4,244 titles. Fewer than 100 titles appear consistently across multiple stakeholder lists. International audiences will become more aware of the types of U.S. awards for children's literature that exist and reflect on the award and acclaimed book lists published in their countries and how they might be used by teachers, parents, and other stakeholders.

Introduction

Books matter (Fox & Short, 2003; Thomas, 2016). Children's books are an essential part of today's classrooms and instructional practices. Many elementary classrooms and middle school language arts classrooms contain extensive classroom libraries (e.g., Harmon et al., 2019; McNair, 2016), and children's literature is infused within curricula to teach literacy skills (e.g., Martinez & McGee, 2000; Serafini, 2003), cross-curricular connections (e.g., LeJeune & Landon-Hays, 2021; Nathanson, 2006), and Social Emotional Learning standards (e.g., Heath et al., 2017). Access to children's literature also promotes reading motivation (e.g., Chou et al., 2016; McGeown et al., 2020; Teale & Gambrell, 2007), a key factor in literacy success.

Teachers in the United States (U.S.) actively utilize children's literature as a tool to enhance children's understanding of cultural differences and social issues. It is often assumed that books on acclaimed and award-winning lists are aligned to titles regularly used in classroom instruction and included in classroom libraries. The lists are also considered quality literature internationally, indicating the potential application to curriculum in other countries.

The purpose of this study is to systematically identify a corpus of U.S. children's literature recognized by key stakeholders in the field of children's literature. This is a foundational phase of a larger study investigating the role of teachers' autonomy and curriculum development through the selection and use of children's literature.

Children's Literature: A Site of Inquiry

A focus of education in the U.S. today is on seeking equity and inclusion for all students. Children's literature is often considered a springboard to promote grand conversations (Eeds & Wells, 1989), including those related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Children's senses of self are significantly impacted by the books they read and encounter (Chaudhri & Teale, 2013; Levin, 2007). Providing opportunities for children to interrogate diverse books can broaden their sense of cultural awareness and provide tools to explore issues of equity and discrimination (Braden & Rodriguez, 2016; Thein et al., 2007). Literature, and critical reading of it, offers the possibility to help children see beyond their own sociocultural, multifaceted identities and to empathize with others.

Thus, the inclusion of children's literature in classrooms is essential, but just having books in classrooms is not enough. Consideration of the content, quality, and diverse representation of the books is also critical, as are teachers' roles in selecting their curricular material. The terms "diversity" and "diverse" are used broadly to reflect the range of social groups and characteristics to which people belong. Contemporary society and today's students reflect a wide variety of populations that include race/ethnicity, language, gender identity, sexuality, and ability, among other groups. These populations should be reflected in the books in curricula and on classroom shelves (Koss & Paciga, 2020, 2022). Teachers' autonomy in book and curricular material selection empowers them to utilize best practices and select materials most relevant to their classrooms (Simpson, 2016; Vaughn & Massey, 2021).

Acclaimed children's literature in the U.S. may be utilized as resources to instruct global issues. American scholar Rudine Sims Bishop explains that children's literature plays a role as a mirror for readers to see themselves, as a window to see others' lives and cultures, and as a sliding glass door to transport readers into the lives of others and potentially act as change agents (Bishop, 1990). As children's literature reflects social context and values, acclaimed books may provide curricular materials for those both within the U.S. and to international audiences. Teale and colleagues (2021) emphasize children's literature as a tool to critically think about socially constructed experiences, beliefs, and knowledge. Therefore, investigating the purposes and criteria for award-winning and acclaimed children's literature can shed light on the social context and values of the U.S.

Impact of Acclaimed Literature in Education

Reading aloud in educational settings offers benefits for children's development related to language development, literacy skills, emotional development, and cultural and social awareness. Thus, selecting quality literature for children is important as book selection reflects teachers' beliefs based on their past experiences and knowledge (Conradi Smith et al., 2022; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2007). In this context, awards for children's literature are resources for quality children's literature that present literary quality and themes (Teale et al., 2021). Yokota (2011) suggests, "children are often required to read award-winning literature in school" (p. 467), but few researchers have endeavored to investigate the extent to which award-winning and acclaimed books are utilized in classrooms. The extant research around award-winning titles largely focuses on presenting the findings of

content analyses of award-winning titles (e.g., Johnson et al., 2018, 2020; Chung & Chaudhri, 2021; Blackston, 2000; Crisp & Hiller, 2011; Leininger et al., 2010; Wedwick & Lathan, 2013), or on examining readers' responses to award-winning titles (e.g., Enciso, 1994; Hall & Williams, 2010; Sipe, 2010). In both cases, the award status functions as a filter through which titles are selected, rather than the focus of the research itself.

Titles receive awards for a variety of reasons as specified by the awarding organizations, frequently offering expert craftsmanship in terms of their inclusion and development of literary, informational, or visual elements. The quality of construction of the literary elements (setting, plot, character, theme, and mood, etc.) or the informational elements (accuracy, organization, documentation, creative presentation of facts/concepts/ideas, and support features such as maps, charts, graph, glossaries, etc.) offer teachers and children plentiful opportunity to practice the goals and objectives for reading literary and informational text that are specified in learning standards. Moreover, award-winning titles function as mentor texts that exemplify a range of strategies for building stories or conveying information. Studying craftsmanship of children's books supports children's emerging writing skills. Similarly, the visual elements of line, shape, space, and color are utilized in synergistic ways in picturebooks to build and expand children's repertoire for constructing meaning.

Not all titles children and teachers select are renowned for their quality, and not all titles win awards. Some titles gain acclaim because readers identify them as "good" books, or books that appeal to the right reader at the right time. There is a place for good books in classrooms and libraries as much as there is a place for award-winning books. Good books are necessary as they capture attention for elements that yield high interest or appeal. Popular books for young children often adopt illustrative and text structures of repetition, poetic language, and engaging wordplay that appeal to children (Teale et al., 2021).

Defining Acclaim

Stakeholders including librarians, teachers, national industry experts, and parents are among those who review children's literature and award prizes to authors and illustrators for their work in the industry. This work has resulted in lists of books used by librarians, teachers, and families to guide their book purchasing and sharing practices. To better understand the meaning of quality children's literature in the United States, we investigate the histories of a range of acclaimed lists across U.S. stakeholder groups with the following research questions. We define "acclaimed" literature as children's literature publicly praised and celebrated for its quality and/or popularity in the U.S. There are many awards that give acclaim to children's literature in the U.S. These awards and lists come from a range of stakeholders and exhibit variation in terms of their inception, the frequency with which titles are announced/awarded, and the features of text that are examined when determining acclaim (e.g., genre, identities of authors/illustrators, text vs. visual components).

Research Questions

This study is a part of a larger project examining teachers' use of acclaimed and award-winning children's literature in PreK-8 classrooms in the United States. Three research questions guided the analysis for the present

study:

1. Who are the stakeholders that have an interest in children's books getting into children's hands?
2. How do these stakeholders determine acclaim? What do they look for?
3. What are the titles that are more universally acclaimed?

Method

Each of the three research questions entailed different methodological approaches to gathering and analyzing the data. To answer our three research questions, we started by identifying stakeholders relevant to the inquiry. We then utilized award and acclaimed lists published by each stakeholder to create databases detailing information specific to each list. Data gathered included the award or acclaimed list's inception, purpose, target audience, criteria, jury selection, and the titles that have been given the acclaim or award. Information from award websites and acclaim-granting organizations and sponsors, as available from winter 2020 through spring 2021, was archived by the researchers. Archives of each list utilized for analysis were also retained by the researchers.

Findings

Information on each award and acclaimed list were summarized in an Excel spreadsheet to compare data across categories for each research question. As the research questions build upon each other, this section discusses each question in turn, and includes both data analysis and findings.

Who are the stakeholders that have an interest in children's books getting into children's hands?

As the researchers are affiliated with the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), a division of the American Library Association (ALA), they naturally started to think about the Association's annual Youth Media Awards (YMA) as a source of information that could be utilized to inform book selection practices. In discussing the project with other colleagues in teacher education in the United States, other stakeholder lists were mentioned as additional resources that likely inform teachers' book selections. The research team met to brainstorm additional stakeholders that warranted further investigation. These included lists published by professional organizations for English/Language Arts teachers, as well as lists published by national children's literature experts that tend to garner attention in the public media. In discussing the project with parents of PreK-8 children, the research team was also encouraged to explore titles appearing on the "top 100" or "best of" lists, so these were included as additional stakeholders. The four main stakeholder categories are briefly defined below to answer Research Question 1. Detailed descriptions of the award and acclaimed book lists are unpacked to answer Research Question 2.

ALSC Youth Media Awards and Affiliates

The ALA is a non-profit organization in the U.S. that aims to promote access and interest in libraries worldwide. ALSC, a division of ALA, honors books for children ages 0-14. Awards under this category include general

awards for excellence and awards targeted to individual genres and/or diverse population groups. Other affiliate organizations, including the Asian Pacific American Librarians Association, the Association for Jewish Libraries, and the American Indian Library Association, also grant book awards. The award winners and honor titles are announced at an annual Youth Media Awards ceremony to provide resources for librarians, educators, parents, and others. All book awards honoring children's titles that are first published in the United States were included in our database for this category. These inclusion criteria yielded eleven award lists.

Teacher Professional Organizations

Three teacher professional organizations were identified in our study: the International Literacy Association (ILA), the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), and the National Education Association (NEA). The ILA was established in 1956 to improve literacy instruction and facilitate discourse about research on reading. Members include educators, researchers, and professionals from around the globe. NCTE focuses on improvement of the teaching and learning of English and the language arts through research and instruction since 1911. Their resources and approaches target practical instruction and support pre- and in-service teachers. The NEA was founded in 1857 to represent public school teachers' voices, including colleges and universities' faculty and staff and retired educators. The association announces literature to celebrate the joy of reading and to promote diversity and inclusion.

Top 100 Lists

Top 100 Lists are resources that serve audiences of parents and educators. The category includes the National Public Radio (NPR)'s 100 Best Children's Books summer book list, the New York Public Library's (NYPL) Best Books of 2020 for Kids, the Scholastic Top 100 list, the School Library Journal's (SLJ) Top 100 picturebooks and children's books lists, and *TIME Magazine's* 100 top children's book list. NPR is a non-profit U.S. public radio station and media organization that broadcasts news and cultural programming across the nation. Their book lists are published in the fall or winter, coinciding with reading and holiday gift-giving seasons. Founded in 1895, the NYPL is the world's fourth-largest public library system and plays a role in providing free books, information, and resources to the public. NYPL's children's book lists aim to provide diverse and engaging reading options for children and their families. The *School Library Journal* is a U.S. magazine that includes book reviews and articles for school librarians. They announce book lists to promote school libraries and classroom uses. Scholastic is a U.S. based multi-national publishing company founded in 1920 that publishes books and educational materials for teachers and parents. It has a long history of promoting children's reading resources for literacy development. *TIME Magazine* is an almost 100-year-old U.S. national news magazine that annually announces a Top 100 book list for children.

Industry Expert Awards

Two major industry expert awards were included in our analysis: the Boston Globe-Horn Book Award and the National Book Award. *The Boston Globe* is one of the oldest newspapers in the U.S. *Horn Book Magazine* is a

prestigious publication in the field of children’s and young adult literature. To celebrate and honor the excellence in literature for children and young adults, the Boston Globe-Horn Book Award by the *Boston Globe* and *The Horn Book Magazine* recognizes fiction, poetry, nonfiction, and picturebooks annually, established in 1967. The National Book Award honors the best literature published in the U.S. annually since 1969.

How do these stakeholders determine acclaim? What do they look for?

Figure 1 summarizes the twenty-two lists and the corresponding number of titles the present study sourced as exemplars of acclaimed and award-winning children’s literature according to the different stakeholder groups. The section that follows details the histories, purposes, and various criteria utilized by each group for selecting books as recipients of awards or acclaim. In addition, the strategies for seating juries for each list are discussed.

ALSC Youth Media Awards and Affiliates (n = 11)	Teacher Professional Organizations (n = 3)	Top 100 Lists (n = 6)	Industry Expert Awards (n = 2)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • American Indian Youth Literature Award • Asian Pacific American Award for Literature • Pura Belpré Award • Randolph Caldecott Medal • Coretta Scott King Award • Theodor Seuss Geisel Award • John Newbery Medal • Schneider Family Book Award • Robert F. Sibert Informational Book Medal • Stonewall Book Award • Sydney Taylor Book Award 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ILA Notable Books • NCTE Notable Books • NEA Top 100 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NPR Top 100 • NYPL Top 100 • Scholastic Top 100 • SLJ Novels Top 100 • SLJ Picturebooks Top 100 • Time Top 100 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boston Globe-Horn Book Award • National Book Award
n = 1,818	n = 1,074	n = 600	n = 752

Figure 1. Sources (by type) of Acclaimed and Award-winning Children’s Literature

ALSC Youth Media Awards and Affiliates

Table 1 offers a summary of the inception dates, purposes, audiences, and jury composition for the awards given by librarian stakeholders. Library organizations have been in the business of giving acclaim to children’s literature for more than 100 years: the oldest of the eleven selected awards, the Newbery Medal, dates to 1922. The two newest awards, the Geisel and the American Indian Award for Youth Literature, were first given in 2006. The histories of each of the eleven award categories reflect the evolution of the ALA’s commitment to diversity within the social and political context of the United States.

Overall, the juries of each of the awards given by ALSC and its affiliates distinguish books based on some defined

component(s) of quality. As Table 1 shows, quality may arise from literary elements, visual elements, or informational content, or quality may be realized through distinguished and authentic depictions of an underrepresented or historically marginalized identity group. Each award has its own evaluation criteria designed to meet the goal of the awards. The John Newbery Medal is an internationally known award that honors “the author of the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children” (American Library Association, 2023, n.p.). The Randolph Caldecott Medal is a prominent award given to illustrators for quality picturebooks. The award evaluates illustrations “with the consideration of all children in mind rather than privileging the dominant culture to the exclusion of others” (American Library Association, 2023, n.p.). As the award recognizes the important role of visuals in children's literature, the jurors investigate quality illustrations free from stereotypes, whitewashing, or other derogatory content. The Theodor Seuss Geisel Award recognizes children's literature for beginning readers, and the Robert F. Sibert Informational Book Medal honors nonfiction children's literature portraying “clear, accurate, and stimulating presentation of facts, concepts, and ideas” with supportive features, such as indexes, tables of contents, maps, and/or timelines (American Library Association, 2023, n.p.). Larrick (1965) and other researchers engaged in critical content analyses of children's books and documented the need for more varied diversity in children's book characters and authorship. The ALA, ALSC, and its affiliates established additional awards to distinguish quality titles by and about people of color and other cultural identity groups: the Sydney Taylor Book Award (Jewish experience), Coretta Scott King Awards (African American experience), Pura Belpré Award (Latino experience), Schneider Family Book Award (disability experience), Stonewall Book Award (LGBTQ+ experience), Asian/Pacific American Award for Literature (Asian/Pacific American experience), and the American Indian Youth Literature Award (Native Americans and Indigenous peoples of North America experience).

The U.S. is a country of immigrants, which over time has developed into a nation or people with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. As a mosaic, which represents small pieces of fabric, glass, or stone to contribute to larger pictures or patterns, the U.S. purports to value diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) to promote children as global citizens. The diverse aims and recognition of each above-mentioned YMA awards present their endeavor to advocate for the representation of diverse voices and cultures in children's literature. To recognize the authenticity of cultural representations and experiences, some awards have strict restrictions when it comes to author and illustrator's heritage and jurors' expertise and heritage. For example, literature for the American Indian Youth Literature Award should be written by the Native community. Non-Native jury members serve limited terms (“two award cycles or four years at the discretion of the American Indian Library Association president” (American Indian Library Association, 2019). Indigenous jury members may indefinitely serve as needed. Similar restrictions are observed in the Sydney Taylor Book Award and the Pura Belpré Award. The Sydney Taylor Book Award selects jurors who are members of the Association of Jewish Libraries and have broad knowledge of Judaic children's literature. The Pura Belpré Award's committee members should possess a self-declared fluent reading knowledge of Spanish, and the awarded author and illustrator must be of Latinx heritage. The Coretta Scott King Awards' author and illustrator must be African American. Their criteria for author/illustrator and jury can be interpreted with multicultural literature scholars' concerns about misinformation or inaccurate descriptions of others' cultures (Durand et al., 2021; Koss & Daniel, 2017). The Schneider Family Book Award specifically focuses on the representation of the disability experience by a protagonist or secondary character rather than the

person with the disability as a background character. Jurors are expected to have the target culture’s authentic knowledge and experience to recognize cultural values and representations.

Table 1. Comparison of the ALSC Youth Media Awards and Affiliates

Name	Inception	Purpose	Audience (years)	Number of Jurors
American Indian YLA	2006	To recognize books by and about Native Americans and Indigenous peoples of North America	3-18	7-10 (2/3 must be members of Indigenous group)
APALA	2001	To recognize books published in the U.S. for Asian/Pacific American experiences and/or cultures by Asian/Pacific Islander American authors and illustrators	0-18	4+ (including chair)
Belpre	1996	To recognize books published in the U.S. by Latino writers and illustrators, celebrating Latino cultural experiences in outstanding works of literature	0-18	6 + chair (must read fluently in Spanish)
Caldecott	1938	To recognize illustrators of distinguished American picturebooks for children published in the U.S.	0-14	15
CSK	1970	To recognize books published in the U.S. by African American authors and illustrators, which reflect the Black experience	3-18	7
Geisel	2006	To recognize distinguished American books for beginning readers published in the U.S.	3-8	6 + chair
Newbery	1922	To recognize authors of the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children published in the U.S.	0-14	15
Schneider	2004	To recognize books portraying an authentic representation of the disability experience	0-18	No more than 9
Sibert	2001	To recognize author(s) and illustrator(s) of the most distinguished informational books published in the United States	0-14	8 + chair
Stonewall	2010	To recognize English-language books published in the U.S. relating to the LGBTQIA+ experience	0-18	11
Sydney Taylor	1968	To recognize quality children’s literature published in the U.S. that authentically portrays the Jewish experience	0-18	7

Teacher Professional Organizations

Teacher professional organizations such as the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), the International

Literacy Association (ILA), and the National Education Association (NEA) also give acclaim to children's books. Teacher professional organizations announce quality book lists to the public to facilitate teachers' practice and to enhance their professional knowledge. Unlike the awards given by the librarians and their affiliates, those given by teachers vary in three important ways.

The first variation is the longevity of the lists. Whereas the oldest standing librarian award dates to 1922 (i.e., the John Newbery Medal, see Table 1), the oldest standing teacher award (ILA's Notable Books for a Global Society) dates to 1995 (see Table 2). NEA started to collect teachers' resources in 2007, so its history is relatively short compared to the other two teacher professional organizations.

The second variation is evident in the extent to which the jurors empaneled or polled must be experts in children's literature. For example, the ILA's Notable Books for a Global Society acclaim is given by scholars who are members of the Children's Literature and Reading Special Interest Group. In contrast, the NEA poll is open to all teachers.

Third, the teacher awards differ significantly in their process and criteria for evaluating books. ILA announces that children's literature published in the U.S. reflects a pluralistic view, that is a core value of many teachers in the U.S. (ILA Special Interest Group, n.d.). NCTE evaluates children's literature focusing on teachers' use in classrooms to invite child responses or participation. ILA and NCTE's book lists are reviewed by multiple (inter)national committees with specific criteria.

Table 2. Comparison of the Acclaimed Book Lists of Teacher Professional Organizations

Name	Inception	Purpose	Audience (years)	Number of Jurors
ILA Notable Books	1995	To recognize books that enhance students' understanding of people and cultures.	5-18	10 (roughly)
NCTE Notable Books	1997	To recognize books of enduring quality that deal explicitly with language, demonstrate uniqueness in the use of language or style, or invite child response or participation	5-13	7
NEA Top 100	2007	To recognize books that teachers use in classrooms	4-12	NA

Unlike ILA and NCTE, NEA asked educators to report the books they teach in their classrooms. The lists affiliated with the ILA and NCTE both provide evaluation criteria that convey value in the extent to which titles present diversity in the world with accuracy and authenticity. As the NEA list does not clearly state criteria other than a prompt to report books that resonate with their students, the lists may have some bias. This NEA list bias may be based on the contents of teachers' classroom libraries and curricula. At the same time, the list represents authentic use of books used in classrooms as educational resources.

Top 100 Lists

Compared to the professional awards by librarians and teaching scholars and practitioners, Top 100 lists provide unclear criteria to support their book lists. For example, NPR's summer 2020 Top 100 explains that they asked radio audiences to submit their favorite kids' books. However, the details are missing, such as how they approached audiences to collect their answers, if there were any specified limits to the number of favorite books respondents provided, and whether responses must have come from U.S. audiences. The NYPL annually provides a list of their top 100 books for children, but their selection process is unclear. Their website explains that “[the list] was selected by eight individual committees, which reviewed nearly three thousand books for various ages and genres, including comics, romance, mystery, and poetry (New York Public Library, 2023, n.p.)” Individual librarians are not asked to provide rationales for how they define the best books for kids and teens—there are no official guidelines that shape their process.

Table 3. Comparison of the Top 100 Lists

Name	Inception	Purpose	Audience (years)	Number of Jurors
NPR Summer 2020 Top 100	NA	To help parents to find books for their children	NA	NA
NYPL Top 100	NA	To report best books for children, teens, and adults	children, teens	NA
Scholastic Top 100	NA	To report best books for children	0-11+	NA
SLJ Novels Top 100	NA	To report top 100 fictional titles for children	9-12	NA
SLJ Picture Books Top 100	NA	To report top 100 picturebooks	NA	NA
Time Top 100	NA	To honor the best books for children and young adults	children, young adults	10+

Industry Expert Awards

The last category of stakeholders in our analysis is industry experts. The awards have a long history of celebrating children's books and their authors since the 1960s. Most awards and acclaimed book lists have strict authorship. For example, most awards and acclaimed book lists require authors and illustrators to hold U.S. citizenship or residency status. The Boston Globe-Horn Book Award, however, is open to writers and illustrators of any country. Three judges evaluate the submitted literature, but the evaluation criteria are unclear. In 2024, the National Book Award (NBA) announced that the awards would no longer require U.S. citizenship for eligibility (Alter, 2024). Past NBA winners, finalists, and judges nominate juries, and the Foundation’s Executive Director selects five judges among them. These five experts read the submitted books and develop their own criteria for discussion, but the criteria are veiled. The Foundation emphasizes that they are not involved in the selection process and that the winner in each category is confidential until they are announced at the Awards Ceremony.

Table 4. Comparison of the Awards Given by Children’s Literature Industry Experts

Name	Inception	Purpose	Audience (years)	Number of Jurors
Boston Globe-Horn Book Award	1967	Excellence in literature for children and young adults	children, young adults	3
National Book Award	1969	Awarded "by writers to writers" to celebrate the best literature published in the United States	young people	5

What are the titles that are more universally acclaimed?

A database was compiled across the four stakeholder categories of books as available from winter 2020 through spring 2021: librarian awards affiliated with the Association for Library Service to Children’s (ALSC) Youth Media Awards, educator awards, book awards given by industry experts, and known Top 100 lists. As a result, 4,244 titles across the 22 award and acclaimed lists were entered into this database, delineated by stakeholder category. Researchers also captured information regarding each title’s audience (grade level and age), book format, Lexile, and publication year. Figure 2 illustrates the process by which titles were cross-referenced to determine which titles were recognized among at least three of the source types. Eighty-six titles appeared on three out of four of the lists. See Appendix A for a complete list of the identified titles.

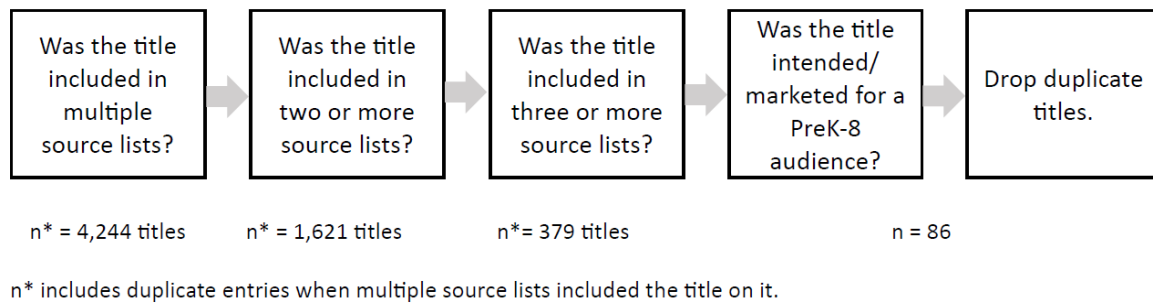


Figure 2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Creating the Corpus

Discussion

The current study showcases award-winning and acclaimed books compiled by diverse groups of stakeholders in library science, classroom education, popular press, and industry. The analysis and findings collectively illustrate the numerous awards and acclaimed lists, the varied histories of each, and the divergent processes by which each stakeholder compiles its list of acclaimed and/or award-winning children’s literature. These stakeholders and lists present one way of reflecting on U.S. history and the collective stakeholders’ social perspectives related to DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion). School systems serving children in the U.S. are historically entrenched in meeting the needs of monolingual, and middle-and upper-class white populations (Smagorinsky, 2017). Children’s literature in the U.S. still dominantly encapsulates white people’s culture and norms. To dismantle the systemic representation and expectation of dominant culture and norms rather than multicultural values and

aspects, diverse people's stories and cultures should be reflected in children's literature and in curriculum (Koss & Paciga, 2020, 2022).

Previous research conducted by Koss et al. (2018) analyzed Caldecott-winning and honor titles from 1938 to 2017, presenting the impacts of social, political, and educational changes in U.S. history on publishing markets. The historical and cultural shifts during particular periods in which books were published reveal the dynamic history of the United States, as recognized in the shift in the construction of main characters' identities appearing in Caldecott-winning and honor titles, as well as in the diverse identities of the storytellers—the authors and illustrators who have contributed to this corpus of children's literature. Stakeholders from the present study also demonstrate and reflect social and political shifts as presented in the Findings section in this paper. This is evidenced by the ways in which the awards and stakeholders have sought out diversity and inclusiveness to reflect the diversity present in American society.

Many of the established awards also impact people's views on social issues and encourage readers to appreciate in their lived contexts. Children's literature impacts children's senses of self and their developing understandings about the world (Chaudhri & Teale, 2013; Levin, 2007). Students in the United States are considerably more racially and ethnically diverse than their teachers (Schaeffer, 2021). Under this context, children's picturebook awards and acclaimed lists are valuable resources to invite children to embody the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

As children's literature and awards demonstrate a society's values and resistance to political and social pressure, international audiences can learn the changing values of the U.S. according to the history and purpose of awards and acclaimed book lists. For example, a recognition of the importance of highlighting different diverse groups is evidenced by various U.S. awards with specific targets of historically minoritized and marginalized groups. Library and educator stakeholders' awareness of underrepresented populations may be different from other countries that are monoethnic or in which issues such as LGBTQ+ and racial identities are not publically discussed—such attention to diversity is not indicated in the awards or acclaim captured by the various Top 100 lists or by industry experts. By sharing U.S. acclaimed and award-winning books, international audiences may expand their own views on diversity, equity, and inclusion in individual contexts.

Our study also reveals the strong voice of teachers as stakeholders in giving acclaim to children's literature. The U.S. education system allows some teachers' discretion to build extensive classroom libraries and utilize literature as educational resources to the curriculum (Harmon et al., 2019; McNair, 2016; Martinez & McGee, 2000; Serafini, 2003). As U.S. teachers are the beneficiaries of quality children's literature and the gatekeepers who select which titles to introduce to children, the resources shared by professional organizations such as the International Literacy Association, the National Council of Teachers of English, and the NEA offer international audiences insight regarding what teachers value in their design of curriculum and instruction as they strive to use literature to meet their educational goals.

Commercial and industrial efforts to recognize quality literature are recognized in our study. However, it should

be emphasized that the top 100 lists by commercial and industrial companies are likely to connect with market profits and selling opportunities. NPR's top 100 lists, that are classified as commercial stakeholders in our analysis, can be impacted by the organization's social and political orientations. A 2019 Pew Research Center survey reported that the NPR audience leans toward a Democratic stance with a politically liberal position (Grieco, 2020). *Time Magazine* is an expensive, prescription-based magazine with a high text complexity. The listeners and readers of these lists who were polled to compile such lists reflect a subsample of the U.S. population. These are unlikely to be resources that are popular with the many groups in the U.S. that do not speak English, or those whose values do not politically align with the ideals and values of the commercial organization.

Regarding the entry to the awards, most awards and acclaimed book lists ask that a copy of the book be sent to each juror for consideration. However, the National Book Award asks for a \$135 entry fee for each title submission. Additional fees are requested to contribute toward a promotional campaign if the submitted book becomes a finalist. Top 100 lists, such as Scholastic, provide links to commercial stores to facilitate consumers' immediate purchase of titles. Considering Kidd's 2007 study, award winners have the potential to sell more. Thus, audiences and consumers of the awarded and acclaimed books circulated by industry and commercial stakeholders need to have a critical stance to contextualize each list.

Several of the award and acclaimed lists discussed here, such as the John Newbery Medal and the Randolph Caldecott Medal, are often considered as internationally recognized because they are well-known by other countries for their success in identifying quality in the craftsmanship of the literature. However, international audiences should be aware of the limitations of these recognitions. Many of the awards and lists presented in this study limit the titles they consider by the residential status of the author, illustrator, or publisher. In other words, the library stakeholders tend to only accept literature written and illustrated by residents or citizens of the United States, with the exception of the Sydney Taylor Book Award. Jurors often consist of educators, librarians, experts in children's literature fields, or the member of American Library Association's members. Although non-US citizens are eligible in some industry-expert awards, such as the BGHB and NBA, a limitation to international authors and illustrators can be the requirement that the literature be published in the US and written in English. Additionally, the accessibility of U.S. award-winning and acclaimed books might be limited to international audiences. This limitation may prove as a barrier. Therefore, international audiences should consider the awarded and acclaimed book lists as only one resource to learn U.S. values and cultures.

At the core of this study was the question of how much consensus exists in terms of children's literature titles that are acclaimed across the groups of stakeholders. The analysis started with more than 4,000 titles across the 11 lists analyzed across the four stakeholder groups. The titles were published across more than 100 years of U.S. history. Of the titles analyzed, fewer than 90 titles were recognized by three or more stakeholder groups as acclaimed. These titles that have been given significant acclaim in the U.S. warrant further exploration and analysis to inform the fields of curriculum and instruction and children's literature in the PreK-8th grades, and for their potential use and application in international contexts. Every country has its own values and cultural beliefs. As children's literature are socially and culturally constructed products, acclaimed or award-winning U.S. children's literature may or may not align to the social, political, and historical values in other parts of the world.

Limitations

This study is limited in several ways. First, the sampling of the award-winning and acclaimed lists occurred from winter 202 through spring of 2021, and so the data analyzed represent a single snapshot of award-winning and acclaimed literature from one moment in the history of the children's literature industry. The children's literature industry continues to publish new titles annually, so the same study conducted today could yield different results. Second, the present analysis selected many, but not all, of the possible lists to include as points of analysis. Other teacher professional organizations in content areas of instruction, such as science or mathematics (e.g., National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 2016; National Science Teaching Association, 2023), art or music (e.g., National Art Education Association, 2024; National Association for Music Education, 2023), also offer teachers lists of recommended children's literature. State-based library organizations also give honors to children's literature that potentially reflect values and priorities different from those honored nationally (e.g., Association of Illinois School Library Educators, 2024). The top 100 lists change periodically—as a group, they do not offer consistent cycles of new versions of their lists annually, as can be expected with the lists published by other stakeholder groups examined in the present study.

Conclusion

This study investigates U.S. children's award and acclaimed book lists as global resources. Children's literature is a social product reflecting the cultural and political values and perspectives of the time a book was written. Consumers, whether in the United States or internationally, should be aware of the purposes, criteria, and processes by which titles have gained their acclaim and recognition as they consider adopting the literature as educational resources within their own culturally unique contexts. In addition to being aware of the contexts of awards, additional research is needed to explore the content of books that hold more consistent acclaim across stakeholder groups and to explore the extent to which these titles are utilized in PreK-8 classrooms. Thus, future studies exploring PreK-8 teachers' use of award-winning and acclaimed literature in curriculum would provide beneficial insight.

Recommendations

In terms of recommendations for practice, teachers in the U.S. and internationally might consider exploring titles beyond those emanating from the lists and stakeholders analyzed in the present study. Incorporating additional acclaimed titles lists, including those published internationally or in other countries, allows for insight to cultures and places outside of the U.S. publishing market. Reading widely allows for more opportunities to encounter culture that move beyond the familiar, opening windows into other societies and their diverse systems of being and doing. Yokota (2008) suggests:

International literature lets us see the lives of people as they represent themselves in their own countries. There could be no more honest a depiction than one created by local people for their own audiences. We can learn how people live their daily lives, what activities they engage in, and what decisions guide their lives (p. 243).

International publishing offers teachers and the children they teach exposure to other cultures in engaging ways that reflect the diverse personal interests of readers. International books can stretch and teach children in interesting ways, as artistic techniques and sensibilities vary greatly across international contexts. The information presented in Table 5 may be helpful for international audiences as they seek to expand their understandings of acclaim and quality beyond the ways these phenomena have been explored in the United States—into the world of international children’s literature.

Table 5. Suggested Resources for Expanding Understandings of Acclaim into the International Context

Resource	Description	Link
Hans Christian Andersen Award	International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) recognizes the lifetime achievement of a single author and illustrator whose body of work has made a lasting contribution to children’s literature	https://www.ibby.org/awards-activities/awards/hans-christian-andersen-award
Bologna Ragazzi Awards	Bologna Children’s Book Fair provides a showcase for international picturebooks. The awards are given in the categories of fiction, non-fiction, Opera Primera (debut works by an author or illustrator), comics, and toddlers	https://www.bolognachildrensbookfair.com/en/awards/bolognaragazzi-awards/8382.html
Nami Concours	Nami Island gives annual acclaim to international children’s picturebook illustrators based on their empathy, universality, creativity, inspiration, and diversity	https://www.namiconcours.com/aboutus/aboutus_01.php
Mildred L. Batchelder Award	The Association for Library Service to Children, a division of the American Library Association, annually awards this prize to a publisher for excellence in a producing a translation of a children’s book originally published in another language and country	https://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/batchelder
World of Words	Resource maintained by the University of Arizona intended to share the children’s and adolescent literature collections held by the university to promote intercultural understanding and global perspectives	https://wowlit.org/
Database of Award-Winning Children’s Literature	Librarian Lisa Bartle annually compiles data from 182 international awards from English-speaking countries and offers these to users in her database	http://www.dawcl.com/introduction.html
International Children’s and Young Adult Book Awards	Jane M. Gangi and Olivia Bushardt of the Children’s Literature Association (ChLA) compile a list of international book awards	https://childlitassn.wixsite.com/intlcommittee/book-awards

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