

Social Justice

in Children's Literature

Tension:

How do authors portray events accurately without overwhelming young readers?

A few questions to consider:

What is normal?

Is it a story of resilience?

Who is the intended audience?

Is the story a reaction to white supremacy?

How are race, class and gender relations portrayed?

As readers bear witness to trauma...

American Dream/Nightmare:

Literature questions if every person has access to the American Dream. Is it a dream? Or is it a nightmare?

Remembering/Forgetting:

As witnesses heal from traumatizing events, they remember. Although they may want to rid themselves of grief, they will never forget. The literature will never forget.

Individual/Collective:

As literature recalls individual events, it may make connections between individual events and terror throughout history.

Mirrors help readers connect to the literature and develop a greater understanding of themselves. Windows enable readers to develop understanding and respect for others.

Time to reflect?

Do readers participate in a critical encounter?

Critical encounters are shocking or surprising language or events in the plot. Critical encounters provide readers opportunities to learn about racism, classism, sexism and other forms of inequality.

Does the story give readers time to consider how they fit in, possibly as a mirror or a window, to the structures in the story?