7-9-2010


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READING WITH A CRITICAL GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE: A STUDY OF

by

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A DISSERTATION THESIS
Submitted to the Graduate School of the
UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI-ST.LOUIS
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
in
EDUCATION
July, 2010

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how children’s and adolescent’s literature promotes global awareness, cross-cultural understanding and cosmopolitanism. It proposes an alternative critical global perspective in the teaching of complex narratives dealing with socio-economic and political transformations in the developing world, with specific reference to South Asian societies. Reframing how transcultural literature is read, a critical global perspective combines global perspectives distilled from theories of development, human rights and international relations, Michel Foucault’s notion of discourse and critical analyses, and textual and visual analyses (Stephens, 1992; Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996). This multidimensional approach contributed 20 questions that explored the gap between cultural traditions and modernity, child and family rights, religious worldviews and secularism, humanitarianism and war. These questions were applied to 18 award-winning North American books, published from 1989 to 2009, to facilitate analysis of how texts, images, teaching guides and scholarly commentaries influence global education. Comparative analyses of the 18 texts reveal that while authors differ in their interpretations of societal transformation, education and educators are unanimously regarded as enablers of development, human rights and global peace. Nevertheless, first-person narrative devices, which are used to draw readers’ engagement into the global context, impede the potential of transcultural literature to equitably mediate cultural and political differences. Paradoxically, while some authors offer more nuanced narratives, the publisher’s teaching guide often perpetuates notions of an idealized American way of life. In the case of picture books, these guides neglect to integrate how visuals provide
more nuanced religious, cultural, and socio-economic realities. The study concludes that these limitations are inadvertently fostered by the emphasis on text-self connections and reader relevance in the writing and teaching of literature (Keene and Zimmerman, 1997). These findings validate the need for a critical global perspective that strengthens text-world connections, which engender the desired outcome of a cosmopolitan global education.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Writing this study would not have been possible without the support and assistance of so many people, books, and experiences. But, had it not been for Dr. Wendy Saul, I would never have had the opportunity to embark on this self-defining experience. I remain deeply grateful to her for recognizing in me a potential I was unaware of. Thanks to her guidance and encouragement I have been able to bring this task to fruition. A special thank you for speaking to me in a language of metaphors and visuals that always went to the heart of the issue.

This study could not have been written without the faculty at the University of Missouri, St. Louis’ College of Education and Department of English, especially Martile Elias, Charles Fazzaro, Virginia Navarro, Joe Polman, Rebecca Rogers, Nancy Singer, and Eric Turley. Their expertise has helped direct this study. Special thanks to my study committee - Charles Fazzaro, Nancy Singer and Eric Turley – whose insights and patient support have guided me throughout.

I am particularly indebted to Dr. Charles Fazzaro and his graduate students. Without those Saturday morning seminars, I would not have been able to grapple with Michel Foucault and raise some of the questions that concern this study. I wish to thank Dr. Rebecca Rogers, whose seminar in Critical Discourse Analysis directed the layers of my analysis. Her attention to method, analysis and context grounded this research.

I wish to thank the editorial review boards of The Dragon Lode and The Journal of Children’s Literature, and Dr. Rebecca Rogers, editor of An Introduction to Critical
Discourse Analysis in Education (in press). The experience of contributing to these publications has been invaluable in the shaping of this study. From them I have learned that writing is always accompanied by self-reflection, clarification, editing, and much patience.

I thank Dr. Joel Glassman who gave me the opportunity to work at the Center for International Studies’ Resource Library. It is through the process of organizing and adding to the library’s collection that I gained a wider understanding of global education. I also thank the late E. Desmond Lee, whose dedication to scholarship has touched many lives. I could not have sustained the long journey of writing a study without his financial support.

I owe a very special thanks to friends and peers at the University of Missouri, St. Louis - Kelly Grigsby, Rob Good, Glenda McCarty, and Inda Schaenen. It is thanks to their friendship and encouragement that I will look back at this experience with affection. Sudarshan Kant’s personal library me made me aware of important scholars I had not considered. I remain indebted to Diane Goodwin at the Graduate Office, whose efficiency made the administrative process of completing this dissertation so effortless.

This experience would not have been so peaceful and fulfilling without my husband and son. To my husband Mohan I am exceptionally thankful for his unquestioning, silent support. As a role model of discipline, depth, and tenacity, I have to thank my son, Ikshu. For unbiased intellectual honesty, Mohan and Ikshu remain my mentors.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ........................................................................................................................ III

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ........................................................................................................ V

TABLE OF CONTENTS ..................................................................................................... VII

FIGURES .......................................................................................................................... XIII

CHAPTER 1: READING THE WORLD IN THE CLASSROOM ........................................ 1

  Problematizing the Uses of Literature ....................................................................... 4

  A Critical Global Perspective: Connecting the Text to the World ......................... 7

  Why Award-winning and Bestselling Transcultural Literature? ..................... 10

  Post 1989 South Asia ............................................................................................... 15

  Overcoming Limitations and Lacunae .................................................................. 16

CHAPTER 2: LOCATING TRANSCULTURAL LITERATURE IN
MULTICULTURAL AND GLOBAL EDUCATION ................................................. 26

  Defining Transcultural and Multicultural Literature ........................................... 28

  Multiculturalism ...................................................................................................... 30
Transcultural Literature ................................................................. 43

Global Education ........................................................................... 52

Towards a Cosmopolitan Global Citizen ........................................ 59

Conclusion .................................................................................... 66

CHAPTER 3: A LAYERED MULTIDIMENSIONAL METHOD .................. 69

A Foucauldian Critical Analysis ..................................................... 71

Text, Teaching Guides, and Images as Discourse ............................. 74

Ideological Discourses in Texts and Visuals ...................................... 81

Conclusion .................................................................................... 88

CHAPTER 4: NARRATING DEVELOPMENT AND MODERNITY .......... 90

Culture and the ‘Selective Tradition’ in Representations ................... 92

Developing the Third World .......................................................... 95

Questioning the Narration of Third World Development .................. 102


The “Selective Tradition” of Book Covers .......................................................... 114

*Shabanu* (1989): “soon enough he’ll turn off the water” ........................................ 119

*Haveli* (1993): “You always have a choice.” .......................................................... 127

*The House of Djinn* (2008): “Things must change if Pakistan is to survive.” .... 133

*Rickshaw Girl* (2008): “Times are certainly changing.” ....................................... 140

Conclusion ............................................................................................................. 147

CHAPTER 5: HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE CHILD ...................................................... 151

Human Rights: An Overview .................................................................................. 153

Human Rights Education and Literature ................................................................. 158

Reading about Human Rights with a Critical Lens ............................................... 160

*Sold* (2006): “Simply to endure . . . is to triumph.” ............................................. 161

*Beneath my Mother’s Feet* (2008): “Now I must make a choice for myself.” .... 173


*The Carpet Boy’s Gift* (2003): “If we go together, the school will protect us.” . 190


Conclusion ............................................................................................................. 205
CHAPTER 6: WAR AND REFUGEES ................................................................. 210

Global Education & Peace Education ...................................................... 213

War/peace in Children’s and Young Adult literature & International Relations 214

Models of International Relations ............................................................... 217

Questioning War ....................................................................................... 221

Under the Persimmon Tree (2005): “My culture will always be with me” ........ 222

The Breadwinner (2000), Parvana’s Journey (2002), and Mud City (2003):
“Sometimes we are bombed by the Taliban. Sometimes we are bombed by the other side.” ......................................................................................................................... 229

Four Feet, Two Sandals (2007): “We will share again in America.” .............. 238

The Story of My Life: an Afghan Girl on the Other Side of the Sky (2005): “Why is my country like this?” ................................................................................................................................. 246

Three Cups of Tea: One Man’s Journey to Change the World. . . . One Child at a Time (2009): “Better schools in Afghanistan and Pakistan would leave the United States more secure.” .............................................................................................................. 250

Listen to the Wind: The Story of Dr. Greg & Three Cups of Tea (2009): “We are the children of Korphe. Can you hear our voices?” ..................................................... 258

Conclusion ................................................................................................. 262
CHAPTER 7: TOWARDS A CRITICAL GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE ................... 265

Educating for Change ................................................................. 266

Opportunities Missed: Managing Cultural and Political Multiplicities ........ 268

Book Covers and Teaching Guides: Going Beyond Empathy and Relevance ... 273

Reading with a Critical Global Perspective ..................................... 277

The Way Forward ................................................................. 283

REFERENCES .............................................................................. 285

APPENDICES ............................................................................. 318

Appendix A: List of books .............................................................. 318

Appendix B: *Homeless Bird*, HarperCollins guide .......................... 322

Appendix C: *Shabanu*, Random House teacher’s guide .................. 323

Appendix D: *Haveli*, Random House guide .................................. 328


Appendix F: *Rickshaw Girl*, Charlesbridge and author’s guide ........... 334

Appendix G: *Sold*, Hyperion guide .............................................. 335

Appendix H: *Beneath my Mother’s Feet*, Simon & Schuster guide .......... 338
Appendix I: *The Roses in my Carpets*, author’s guide........................................ 340

Appendix J: *Four Feet, Two Sandals*, author’s guide ........................................ 341
FIGURES

Figure 1: Classification of global literature ................................................................. 30
Figure 2: A critical global perspective ........................................................................ 70
Figure 3: Homeless Bird (2000) .............................................................................. 105
Figure 4: Shabanu (1989, 2003), Haveli (1993, 1995) and The House of Djinn (2008) 115
Figure 5: The House of Djinn (2008) ...................................................................... 136
Figure 6: Rickshaw Girl (2008) ............................................................................... 142
Figure 7: Sold (2006) .............................................................................................. 163
Figure 8: Beneath my Mother’s Feet (2008) ............................................................ 176
Figure 9: Iqbal (2003) & Figure 10: Iqbal (2005) .................................................... 183
Figure 11: The Carpet Boy’s Gift (2003) ................................................................. 191
Figure 12: “a beautiful red and gold flag rippled above a building” .................... 192
Figure 13: “A pen, not a knife, should be your tool.” & ....Figure 14: “Nadeem sawed . . .
the rope” .................................................................................................................. 193
Figure 15: “Nadeem stepped into the sunlight, in the steps of Iqbal ” ..................... 194
Figure 16: Resources on Iqbal Masih and child labor. .......................................... 195
Figure 17: The Roses in my Carpets (1998) cover and last page......................... 199
Figure 18: “I’m running too slowly, dragging my mother and sister behind.”........ 200
Figure 19: ”But I will have a skill no one can take away.” .................................... 201
Figure 20: “the muezzin calls me to prayer” ............................................................ 202
Figure 21: “A car brushes past” & Figure 22: “I hate school” ............................... 203
Figure 23: Under the Persimmon Tree (2005) ....................................................... 222

Figure 25: *Four Feet, Two Sandals* (2007)................................................................. 240

Figure 26: “Lina went to do the washing, wearing one beautiful sandal.” .............. 241

Figure 27: “The girls practiced their names in the dirt” ........................................ 242

Figure 28: “used clothing off the back of a truck”................................................... 243

Figure 29: “the beginning of Ramadan” ................................................................. 244

Figure 30: “All of your important papers are in this bag” ...................................... 245

Figure 31: *The Story of My Life: An Afghan Girl on the Other Side of the Sky* (2005) .. 246

Figure 32: *Three Cups of Tea: One Man’s Journey to Change the World ... One Child at a Time* (young reader’s edition, 2009)................................................................. 250

Figure 33: *Listen to the Wind: the Story of Dr. Greg & Three Cups of Tea* (2009) ...... 258

Figure 34: "We study in the school that we helped to build.” .................................. 261

Figure 35: “We are the children of Korphe.” ......................................................... 261

Figure 36: Twenty guiding questions ................................................................. 281
CHAPTER 1: READING THE WORLD IN THE CLASSROOM

Far away in the heavenly abode of the great god Indra, there is a wonderful net. . . . There hang the jewels, glittering like stars of the first magnitude, a wonderful sight to behold. If we now arbitrarily select one of these jewels for inspection and look closely at it, we will discover that in its polished surface there are reflected all the other jewels in the net, infinite in number. Not only that, but each of the jewels reflected in this one jewel is also reflecting all the other jewels, so that there is an infinite reflecting process occurring. (Cook, 1977, p. 2)

In today’s increasingly interdependent world, global awareness is no longer an option. The importance of global education for 21st century educators and students is at the heart of this study. It is driven by the conviction that awareness of global challenges and the ability to negotiate multiple cultural, social, economic and political realities are essential skills to be taught to future world citizens. For American teachers and curriculum designers, integrating a global perspective in the curriculum is of particular national and international significance. In the global arena, the United States, and by extension its citizenry, are at the center of international relations. Nationally, the urgency to investigate how educators and students view and interact with the world becomes even more imperative when current immigration trends are taken into consideration. Citing a prevailing trend, the 2000 United States Census Bureau estimated that between 1990 and 2000 foreign born citizens increased by 57%, compared with 9.3% for the native
population (Baluja et al., 2003). In addition, globalization and the transnational fluidity of citizens have collapsed the boundaries between the nation and the world.

There are many avenues for gaining knowledge and understanding about the world, ranging from interpersonal relations, the media, and school activities such as the model UN, or the Global Nomad program (GNG) which organizes video-conference discussions among young people around the world. From a curricular point of view, global issues are included in social studies, satisfying the National Council for Social Studies’ (NCSS), thematic strand ix, which relates to global connections and interdependence. Across the grades, however, global education is energized with fiction that illustrates the impact of global issues and events on individuals, while evoking the reader’s engagement and empathy (Sandmann and Ahern, 2002). These books introduce a contemporary perspective, otherwise lacking in social studies text books for both students and teachers (Gay, 2003). As Rudine Sims Bishop (1999) observes, “In many contemporary elementary and middle school classrooms, children’s literature, rather than the traditional text-book, is at the core of both literacy instruction and teaching and learning in the content areas” (p. 118). In fact, according to Louise Rosenblatt (1995) “the student’s social adjustments may be more deeply influenced by what he absorbs through literature than by what he learns through the theoretical materials of the social science course” (p. 21). This nexus between literature and social studies is exemplified in NCSS’s annual publication, “Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People,” that includes fiction. In addition, NCSS’s journal, “Social Studies and the Young Learner” often carries articles by teachers on the use of literature in the social studies
classroom. Relevant NCSS publications include *Children’s Literature in Social Studies* (Krey, 1998), and *Linking Literature with Life: the NCSS Standards and Children’s Literature for the Middle Grades* (Sandmann & Ahern, 2002). These publications identify exemplary books (fiction and non-fiction) on the world, and offer innovative teaching ideas for the use of literature in the classroom.

Global literature, comprising of international literature imported from other countries, multicultural literature which addresses a nation’s pluralistic citizenry, and transcultural literature about the rest of the world, is recommended for enhancing global awareness and fostering knowledge and understanding of other cultures (Angus, 2007; Freeman & Lehman, 2001; Lepman, 1969; Hadaway, 2007; McKenna, 2007; Noddings, 2005; Stan, 2002) In *Global Perspectives in Children’s Literature*, Freeman and Lehman (2001) argue for the beneficiary inclusion of children’s literature because of “the positive relationship to specific curricular connections,” and their contribution to international understanding by helping “remove barriers among people” (2001, pp. 12-13).

This study contributes to a broader and more nuanced understanding of transcultural literature that “portrays peoples, cultures, and geographic regions of the world outside the reader’s country” (Pratt and Beaty, 1999, p. 2). The purpose of this study is to identify and exemplify critical global perspectives in the reading of transcultural literature, with a focus on how gainful societal/global change is narrated in 18 award-winning and bestselling children’s and adolescent’s books on South Asia, which were published from 1989 to 2009 (see Appendix A for a list). The term South Asia refers to the following countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives,
Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The study is limited to the genre of contemporary realism, both fictive and autobiographical, that is set in the last 20 years (Russell, 2009).

Reframing how transcultural literature should be read, the study proposes a multidimensional method that combines global education’s study of “those problems and issues which cut across national boundaries” (Tye, 1992, p. 6), with literary criticism and visual semiotic analysis. Herein referred to as a critical global perspective, it is a mode of analysis that forges stronger links between the text and the world, thereby producing the desired outcome of a cosmopolitan global education. Cosmopolitanism recognizes the need for global perspectives that take into account cultural, social, economic, and political differences, without devaluing the emphasis on a shared humanity. The textual analysis of these 18 books on South Asia is strengthened by an examination of visuals, teaching guides on publisher’s and author’s Web sites, and the commentary of scholars. This proposed approach ensures that the connections drawn between the text, institutionalized pedagogical practices, literary criticism, and global perspectives, enable educators to identify the complexities of global realities transmitted through transcultural literature.

**Problematizing the Uses of Literature**

Books and journal articles on how to integrate these books in the curriculum reflect the principles of critical pedagogy, calling upon readers to combat social injustices around the world (Glasgow and Rice, 2007; Marian J. McKenna, 2007; Pinsent, 1997; Yokota and Kolar, 2008). Marian J. McKenna (2007) writes that global literature should not only “teach students about the world in which they live but also transform them into
engaged, active citizens” (p. 166). Theresa Rogers (1999) adds that “The role of literature in this new enterprise is closely aligned with issues of power and domination, and is embedded in historically situated arguments about difference and social justice” (1999, p. 143). Moreover, literature’s scope is enhanced by technology that widens its global reach. Increasingly, authors’ and publishers’ Web sites offer links to transnational organizations such as Amnesty International, the International Labor Organization, or the International Campaign to Ban Landmines. In this highly interactive era, it is important to recognize that literary practices go beyond disciplinary domains, and exert influence over readers’ understanding of global affairs.

The uncritical use of transcultural literature to promote global social activism fails to adequately acknowledge that books, which are written and marketed for children and young adults, are often ideologically inflected. Read at a formative age, these books are vested with a society’s preoccupations and aspirations. In fact, as socio-political indicators, they could offer an insight into the worldviews and values a generation transmits. Zena Sutherland, a stalwart of the field, has this to say: “children’s literature both reflects the values of our society and instills these values in children” (1997, p. xi). Scholars of children’s literature have also highlighted the ideological import of literature written for children and young adults (Harris, 2003; Hollindale, 1992; Hunt, 1992; Kohl, 1995; McGillis, 2000; Sarland, 1999; Sims, 1982; Stephens, 1992; Sutherland, 1985; Taxel, 1986; Trites, 2000; Zipes, 1979). As Peter Hunt (1999), a foremost critic of children’s literature succinctly observes, “children’s books are part of the ideological structures of the cultures of the world, so that their history is constructed ideologically”
(p. 5). Viewed in this light, one can surmise that transcultural literature is embedded with a compass, directing a new generation on how to participate in the world.

The permeability of boundaries between social studies, literature, and action urges a reexamination of the relationship between literature, knowing and understanding the world, and its utility as a springboard for global activism. The purpose of my analysis is not to undermine the factual, moral, and humanitarian validity of books that seek to broaden the reader’s awareness of human rights violations, or social and gender inequities in other cultures and nations. Rather, I argue that in spite of the indisputable commitment to human rights, empathy with the disempowered, and the pedagogical need to further social justice, a critical stance needs to be appropriated so that teachers and students are aware of the oft-excluded complexity of global issues. Without it, using literature as a catalyst for global change risks becoming a tool for ideological and political agendas.

Hence I propose that before transcultural literature is used to propel engagement against global social injustices, educators should, (1) gain a better understanding of how texts, images, and narrative devices are shaped by the macro discourses of intercultural and international relationships, (2) investigate what narratives of change are proffered in the text, (3) question how cultures are represented, (4) explore political undertones, (5) be critical of power relationships between the reader and represented cultures, as depicted in the text and teaching guide, and (6) assess and analyze the significance of how texts, images, and teaching guides shape our understanding and participation in the world. A
critical global perspective, as proposed in this study, identifies and demonstrates how reading transcultural literature can satisfy these criteria.

Only then can literature fulfill its potential of helping students understand a global perspective that is sensitive to the complexities of global issues, thereby enabling them to take thoughtful action.

A Critical Global Perspective: Connecting the Text to the World

In the broadest terms, this study is directed by that aspect of critical pedagogy which draws attention to the process through which knowledge is produced and made legitimate (Darder, Baltodano and Torres, 2003; Giroux and McLaren, 1989). Keeping in mind that contemporary realism straddles fiction and reality (ies), I advocate for a critical global perspective that enables educators and readers to identify connections between the text and the world in ways that are cognizant of embedded and excluded perspectives. The domain of global education offers a global perspective to the way literature about the world can be read. The term ‘global perspective’ was coined by Robert Hanvey (1976), an early proponent of global education. He identified five dimensions of a global perspective: (1) consciousness of unexamined assumptions and other perspectives, (2) awareness of prevailing world conditions, (3) cross-cultural awareness, (4) global dynamics, or knowledge on “theories and concepts that may increase intelligent consciousness of global change” (p. 13), and (5) awareness of human choices. Global education is not to be confused with the study of education around the world, as in the case of comparative education. Nor should it be conflated with international education. Gutek (1993) maintains that, whereas the international perspective is concerned with
relationships between nations, global education is distinct because it sees the world as an interdependent ‘global village,’ in which the role of the nation-state is diminished by the pressing issues of a global society (p. 29). Global education typically includes issues such as cross-cultural awareness, population growth, environmental concerns, human rights, international relations, Third World\(^1\) development, and peace education (Diaz, Massialas, and Xanthopoulos, 1999). Since its emergence in the 1970s, global education has promoted a conceptual framework that foregrounds interdependence and the need for a consciousness of differing viewpoints and worldviews.

While theories on development, human rights, and international relations provide an important understanding of how literature is located in and converses with the macro-discourses of our time, they do not offer tools for literary analysis. For the specific purpose of analyzing the texts and visuals, two more lenses are recruited. The first lens relates to Michel Foucault’s understanding of critical analysis and his notion of discourse, as espoused in *The Discourse on Language* (1971), *The Archaeology of Knowledge*

\(^1\) The term “Third World,” coined by Alfred Sauvy in 1952, distinguished between First World capitalist countries with high economic and industrial growth, the Communist Second World, and the Third World of largely postcolonial countries. Recently, scholars claim that the Third World ended with the fall of Communism. In this study, the terms Third World and developing countries are both used. Third World is used to emphasize economic and political overtones, whereas ‘developing countries’ acknowledges the momentum of change in these societies. To avoid differences between under-developed and developing countries, only the latter is used.
(1972), and *Discipline and Punish* (1979). The second lens is provided by scholars who are concerned with ideological discourses in the text and images of children’s and young adult literature (Botelho & Rudman, 2009; Hollindale, 1992; Hunt, 1999; Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996; Nikolajeva and Scott, 2000; Nodelman, 1992; Stephens, 1992; Trites, 2000). This multidimensional and interdisciplinary approach brings to surface issues and viewpoints that are otherwise not easily discernible to the reader. It is a critical mode of analysis in so far as it problematizes common assumptions, exposes conceptual gaps, and identifies embedded and excluded discourses.

The flexibility of this multidimensional approach reveals hitherto undervalued connections between the text and the contemporary world. For instance, viewing the selected 18 books as narratives on Third World development and modernization, demystifies the common assumption that transcultural literature promotes cross-cultural understanding. The representation of culture is further problematized when postcolonial discourse analysis helps identify a gap between celebration and critique. Embedded discourses surface when the narration of cultural traditions, human rights violations, war, and the plight of refugees, brings to light a subtext on nation building, and ideological tensions between secular and religious worldviews. And when the narration of the war in
Afghanistan is scrutinized through the viewpoint of International Relations\textsuperscript{2} theories, educators and readers are made aware of the limited perspectives being offered. Most importantly, all these issues – development, modernity, human rights, war and refugees – broaden the scope of literature’s contribution to global education.

**Why Award-winning and Bestselling Transcultural Literature?**

Literature, as a narrative with a storyline that is artfully presented by an author, wields a particularly powerful impact on readers. For instance, narrative devices, such as a first-person point of view or the present tense, are designed to elicit reader engagement and identification. Charlotte Huck, a leader in the teaching of children literature, captures the importance of storytelling when she says, “The province of literature is the human condition. Literature illuminates life by shaping our insights” (2001, p.3). In the process, the “story” furthers an understanding of general principles (moral, psychological, social), presents ways of classifying and categorizing things and events in the world, and is a source of affective knowledge that bears upon our future ability to respond to morally complex situations (Davies, 2007, pp. 144-147). Extending this argument to the global arena, Davies (2007) observes that by embodying the existential, ethical, social, and

\[ \text{\textsuperscript{2} It is common practice to use capitals when referring to IR theories, thereby distinguishing between the practice of international relations and a discipline which reflects on the relations between global actors.} \]
moral directives of a society, “stories” explicitly or implicitly “govern the unfolding of events in the real world” (p. 152). Indeed, in the international arena, the pen has sometimes proved as worthy as international relations. A salient example is Alan Paton’s *Cry, the Beloved Country* (1948), which brought apartheid to world consciousness (Chapman, 2003, p. 176). The literary narrative can also be in the maelstrom of global conflict. The most iconic example of the contentious intersection between fictive representation and politics was the furor over Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses* (1989), that thrust the storyteller directly into the stream of history.

The nexus between fiction, fact, and social processes is not tenuous. As Anthony Giddens points out, “literary style is not irrelevant to the accuracy of social descriptions” because “the social sciences draw upon the same source of description (mutual knowledge) as novelists or others who write fictional accounts of social life” (1984, pp. 284-285). Some might venture to add that from a postmodern point of view, both literature and the way reality is represented in history and the social sciences are narratives or the “recounting of a series of facts or events and the establishing of some connection between them” (Childs and Fowler, 2006, p. 148). In particular, the genre of contemporary realism can be considered as a narrative complement to global education. Stories crystallize the relationship between individual lives and the bigger picture, by weaving characters into the warp of society, culture, economics, and the fallout of politics. Plot too, moves on the wheels of conflict, transformative action, and interdependence. Authors can include different points of view, thereby satisfying global education’s call for multiple perspectives. Characters can evolve towards self-awareness
and an empowered sense of being. When read through a critical global perspective, these books can contribute to a global awareness that satisfies Hanvey’s paradigm of a global perspective, while recruiting literature’s unique ability to connect the reader to the world.

Why focus on transcultural literature? Why not books produced in the country of origin, and written by insiders? Commonly referred to as international literature, these books are lauded as a positive force in cross-cultural and international relations (Batchelder, 1996; Gebel, 2006; Rosenblatt, 1946; Stan, 2002). Even in the midst of World War II, Paul Hazard (1983) maintained that a book is “a messenger that goes beyond mountains and rivers, beyond the seas, to the very ends of the world, in search of new friendships” (p. 146). Indeed, a study comparing books written by and for South Asians and those designed for the North American reader, is a topic ripe for the taking. In countries like India, the publication of children’s and young adults’ books in the English language is burgeoning (Ghai, 2009). Indian authors are taking on issues relating to gender, tradition, war, and poverty. Paro Anand’s *No Guns at My Son’s Funeral* (2005), which was nominated for the 2006 IBBY Honor list, is the story of a young Kashmiri boy who is drawn into terrorism. Deepa Agarwal’s *Not Just Girls* (2004) is a collection of short stories dealing with gender issues, with a focus on middle class families. Regrettably, these books are not readily available in North America.

In the United States, most international literature is associated with the Mildred L. Batchelder Book Award, an annual award that promotes the importation and translation of children’s literature. Unfortunately, most of the award-winning titles come from Europe, with some exceptions from Israel, Turkey, and Japan. As Doris Gebel (2006)
Lakshmanan, Subi, 2010, UMSL, p. 13

says in *Crossing Boundaries with Children's Books*, “In recent years the Batchelder committee has been having a hard time finding enough books to evaluate. The sad fact is that very few publishers are commissioning translations” (p. 6). In 1995 only 1.2% of children’s books in the United States were translated, compared to 66% in Sweden that same year (Tomlinson, 1998). In the 2003 summer issue of the “Publishing Research Quarterly,” literary agent Kendra Marcus reports that the quantity of translated children’s books at Simon & Schuster fell by roughly 75% in 2002 (p. 51). Considering the meager representation of international literature, educators who strive to bring global diversity to the school are often limited to books written by North Americans about the world, also known as transcultural literature.

The inclusion of transcultural literature in recommended reading lists and the curriculum is facilitated by the conferring of awards and market response. The criterion of award-winning books is also premised on the Foucauldian relationship between discourse, the production of knowledge, and power. From this perspective, institutional ratification and awards give books their validity as legitimate sources of knowledge about other cultures, countries, and contemporary global dynamics. By virtue of this recognition, these books command strategic access to public discourse, thereby influencing social interaction. It may of course be a chicken and egg situation: books win awards precisely because of their resonance with the “societal Conversation going on around us” (Gee, 2006, p 49). In either case, award-winning books are indicators of dominant discourses in a society, at a given time in history.
This study is limited to books that have won any one of three recognitions: the National Council for the Social Studies Notable Trade Books for Young People, Notable Books for a Global Society (NBGS), and recipients of the Jane Addams Children’s Book Award. All three awards directly address cross-cultural and global understanding. The National Council for the Social Studies’ (NCSS) Notable Trade Books for Young People, instituted in 1972, include books relating to NCSS’s strand (i) on culture, and strand (ix) on global connections. The Jane Addams Children’s Book Award, founded in 1953, is given to books that promote the cause of peace, social justice, world community, and gender and racial equality. Notable Books for a Global Society, is part of IRA’s (International Reading Association) Children’s Literature and Special Interest Group. Since 1996, its committee publishes a list of books commended for enhancing student (K-12) understanding of people and cultures throughout the world. All three awards include fiction, non-fiction, biographies, autobiographies, poetry, picture books, historical fiction, and folktales. The focus of this study is the narration of contemporary events, whether autobiographical, biographical, or fictive.

For the purpose of this analysis, these awards unfortunately exclude important conversations regarding the trajectory of a single author, or the significance of bestsellers. Hence, I include the two sequels that complete Suzanne Staples Fisher’s *Shabanu* trilogy (*Haveli* 1993, and *The House of Djinn* 2008). As the most prolific contemporary writer on South Asia, anything short of this would have been a disservice. *Under the Persimmon Tree* (2005), a winner of the ALA Best Book for Young Adults, completes Staples’ unique contribution. All these books may have won institutional accolades, but are not
bestsellers like Greg Mortenson’s young adult and picture book versions of his autobiographical *Three Cups of Tea* (2009). Combining award winning books with bestsellers and the tribute to an author, gives the study a more comprehensive viewpoint on the types of narratives that are institutionally recognized and/or resonate with the public (see Appendix A for a list the books).

**Post 1989 South Asia**

Why South Asia? Post 1989 literature on South Asia serves as a catalyst for discussions on contemporary global issues in general, and on South Asia in particular. The need to view these books through a critical lens becomes all the more significant if one takes into account America’s current geo-political role in the region. Politically, Afghanistan and Pakistan remain at the center of American engagement abroad. While these countries bring international relations and the legacy of past and present wars to the fore, the representation of countries like India and Bangladesh highlights human rights and Third World development issues. It is my intention that the critical analysis of literature written about these countries will contribute toward a deeper reflection on how literature mediates our interactions with this geopolitical region. In addition, as an educator of South Asian origin, I find myself located at a crossroad that is familiar with the worldviews of both South Asia and the United States. These socio-cultural experiences have enabled me to tease apart the complex web that constitutes the burgeoning literature on South Asia, from 1989 to 2009.

The choice of 1989 as a start date is by no means casual. The Berlin Wall had fallen and the Cold War had ended, leaving the United States as the only superpower at
the helm of a new world order. 1989 was also the year when Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses* was published, earning him an onerous *fatwa*, heralding an age when literature, visual representations, and cultural ideologies became highly politicized. In the United States, the 1989 publication of Suzanne Fisher Staples’s novel, *Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind*, became the iconic narration of changes in South Asian societies. Staples’ coming-of-age story about a Pakistani adolescent drew from her experience as a USAID worker in Pakistan. In 1990 the book was awarded the Newbery Honor, making it the first work of contemporary realism based in South Asia to have received this accolade after a lapse of more than sixty years\(^3\). It is precisely by linking literature to geopolitical events that a critical global perspective can illuminate how transcultural literature constitutes an important interlocutor in global education.

**Overcoming Limitations and Lacunae**

Up until now, the reading of literature about the world has highlighted the representation of culture, a predilection that is reflected in the very terms transcultural and multicultural. Although the utility of the cultural aspect of transcultural literature is important, the discussion to date has underscored culturally mandated asymmetric power

\(^3\) Dhan Gopal Mukerji, of Indian origin, won the Newbery Medal in 1928 for *Gay Neck, the Story of a Pigeon* (1927)
relations in race, class, and gender (Bradford, 2007; Glasgow and Rice, 2007; Maddy and MacCann, 1996). Readers are encouraged to seek out cultural practices that need to be changed. For instance, Masha Rudman (1995) categorizes many of the books in this selection according to issues like sexuality, gender roles, and abuse. Unfortunately, notwithstanding the obvious need for change, the essentialist representation of debilitating South Asian cultural traditions obscures the heterogeneity and dynamism of these societies. I would argue that to some extent this selective representation of culture is due to the legacy of multiculturalism; hence the importance of an overview of multiculturalism in the next chapter. On the one hand, these books are a curricular source for multiculturalism’s call for cultural awareness, and on the other, they roundly satisfy multiculturalism’s advocacy for the marginalized and disempowered. Unfortunately, less attention is paid to the important work done in critical pedagogy (Giroux, 1989), critical multiculturalism (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2001), cultural studies (Hall, 2000), and postcolonial literary criticism (Said, 1979) on the political implications of stereotypical textual and visual cultural representations. In the event, readers are led to either celebrate cultural traditions confined to the arts, or critique the obvious failings of certain cultural practices. It is precisely this chasm between cultural celebration and critique that urges an investigation of how change is narrated in the texts and teaching guides. The notion of gainful change is central to both global education (Hanvey, 1976) and children’s and young adult literature, both of which are vested with the task of preparing young readers for the future. It stands to reason that a critical approach would begin with how these books and their guides identify the need for change, and what solutions are offered.
Resisting the customary emphasis on culture (Glasgow and Rice, 2007; Giorgis, Mathis & Bedford, 2007; Lamme, 2007; Lo, 2001), I remain wary of fossilizing cultures into monolithic representations that diminish a society’s ability to change. Furthermore, human rights advocates caution that child labor or child prostitution is *not* a cultural issue. In concomitance with a more dynamic view of societies and their diverse cultures, I seek evidence of how socio-cultural shifts are narrated, and who is empowered to motivate and enact change. Is agency indigenous or imported? If individual protagonists are catalysts of such changes, how do they become proactive, self-aware actors?

In spite of the complexity of some of these stories, teaching guides, the images on book covers, and publisher’s marketing hooks often perpetuate hierarchical comparisons between the implied American reader and the ‘other’ culture or nation, thereby privileging Western perspectives. Going beyond postcolonial criticism, this study concludes that this practice is partially due to the pedagogical need to be relevant to the student’s context and experiences. Another pitfall is an over-emphasis in teaching guides and scholarly commentary on the protagonist as an exceptional individual who overcomes cultural obstacles. First person narratives and book covers that zoom in on the individual, all favor a text-self engagement, often overshadowing the complexity of global context. In the Leavisite tradition of literary criticism, scholars like Rosann Jweid and Margaret Rizzo (2004) look at the strong personality traits of the protagonist. Giorgis, Mathis and Bedford (2007) view many of these 18 books through the prism of “strong females in the global tapestry” of stories. There is, of course, much to be commended in this approach. Cultural differences are set aside and human universalisms
are elevated. Notwithstanding the laudable goal to build bridges across differences and “promote understanding and tolerance between races, religions, and cultures,” and the “oneness of the human race” (Jweid & Rizzo, 2004, v-vi), such a stance fails to investigate the troublesome terrain these bridges cross. My cautious approach to blindly accepting universalisms does not in any way undermine the merits of such a world-view, but takes heed of Suarez-Orozco and Qin-Hilliard’s (2004) sage advice that in a globalized world, “two domains in particular will present the greatest challenges to schooling worldwide: the domain of difference and the domain of complexity” (p. 3).

Even when scholars have sought the interface between literature and global education as a means to further knowledge and understanding of global issues and world events (Freeman and Lehman, 2001; Glasgow and Rice, 2007; Hadaway and McKenna, 2007), little or no attention has been paid to the theories that inform processes of social transformation. In fact, Pratt and Beaty (1999, p.5) observe that though transcultural literature is an important conduit for global education, it has been a neglected area of research. This study brings to the field unexplored connections with social and political theories regarding Third World development, human rights, and international relations. This approach fully satisfies Hanvey’s (1976) suggestion that a global perspective should include “theories and concepts that may increase intelligent consciousness of global change” (p. 19). What may seem like an overextended digression is in fact the root of this study. It is through a systematic survey of these theories, that I arrive at a set of 20 questions that will enable readers to question the texts and images in ways that are directly related to macro world events and issues.
Throughout this study, specific questions are culled from this multidimensional method. In chapter 3, six questions emerge from a Foucauldian critical discourse analysis of text, and visual semiotic analysis:

**Textual and visual analysis of discourse**

1. What discourses are included and excluded in the text (and, or image)?
2. How can the book/s be read in a way that surfaces multiple discourses regarding social transformation?
3. How do language-use and narrative structure limit discourse?
4. What or who is being contrasted textually and/or visually?
5. How do images support, extend, or problematize the narrative’s discourses?
6. How do picture books and novels differ in the resolution of socio-cultural, economic and political problems, especially with respect to power relations?

Each subsequent chapter is prefaced by an overview of the main issue at hand – development, modernity, human rights, and international relations. Further questions emerge from these brief reviews.

**Development and modernization**

7. Through what processes is cultural change narrated in these books?
8. Is there evidence of a shift in a ‘selective tradition’ in cultural representations?
9. Does development entail an opposition between tradition and modernity?

10. If so, are Western models of modernization privileged?

11. Does the book tackle the dilemma of modernizing the Third World, without undermining its autonomy?

**Human Rights**

12. Is there a political subtext in the narration of change?

13. How do stories depict the relationship between civil, political, social, economic, and cultural rights?

14. Are human rights violations ascribed to culture?

15. How do authors resolve the tension between individualized self-actualization and familial/communal ties?

**War**

16. How does the author narrate the nation?

17. What is the role of supranational organizations?

18. How do authors regard the benefits or demerits of globalization?

19. What role does culture play?

20. How does an individual’s empowerment come about?

This inter-disciplinary approach generates a roadmap of 20 questions that guide a critical global perspective to the reading of transcultural contemporary realism on developing countries. My intention is that these questions will be applicable to any book dealing with similar issues, and can nurture future citizens of the world who are more mindful of global complexities. In the final chapter of this study, these 20 questions are
reorganized according to six defining concepts: change, perspectives, hierarchical binaries, relationships, political undertones, and visual communication. In doing so, I acknowledge the enhanced flexibility of categorization by concepts rather than a single dominant theme or issue.

In order to fully appreciate the conditions and climate in which transcultural literature is produced and read, chapter two provides an overview of transcultural literature and global education. Since transcultural literature is often subsumed under multicultural literature, a detailed review of the latter is necessary. Issues such as cultural authenticity, the insider/outsider debate, and critical multiculturalism’s concern with race-gender-class relationship are explored. Scholarly work on transcultural literature is reviewed through three metaphors: as a bridge that reaches out to human universalisms, as a mirror that holds up the critical appraisal of postcolonial theories, and as window that increases the reader’s global awareness. A critical global perspective aims at combining all three approaches. An overview of global education introduces the historical conditions of its emergence and development, and the main concepts of interconnectedness and perspective-consciousness. Chapter two concludes with the idea of cosmopolitanism, that conciliates the national concerns of multiculturalism with the concerns of global education.

Chapter three delineates the three dimensions employed in the analysis: (1) a global perspective (2) Michel Foucault’s mode of critical analysis of discourse and (3) analysis of text and images. The chapter concludes with a set of six guiding questions that emerge from this framework. Together with Hanvey’s description of a global perspective,
and theories on development, human rights, and international relations, this multidimensional approach constitutes what I refer to as a “critical global perspective.”

Chapters four, five, and six, examine the novels and picture books through the critical global perspective established in chapter three. Each chapter relates to one of global education’s concerns - culture, development, human rights, war and refugees. There is a rationale behind the organization of these chapters. From a historical point of view, the chapters reflect a marked shift in discourse from development to human rights and from cultural identity to a vocabulary of global universalisms. All these issues play out in the concluding chapter on war and refugees, which addresses an irksome ethical contradiction: When at war, how can one talk of development, social change, and the upholding of human rights?


Chapter five focuses on human rights, specifically the exploitation of children. *Sold*, Patricia McCormick’s 2006 National Book Award Finalist on child prostitution underscores the relationship between culture, gender, poverty, and sexual exploitation. Amjed Qamar’s *Beneath my Mother's Feet* (2008) confronts the unsettling reality of


Chapter seven presents a discussion of the dominant discourse on education as a means to self-empowerment and global peace. Revisiting the interface between global education and transcultural literature, the contributions and limitations of these 18 books and their teaching guides are assessed. The study concludes that when authors fail to
include different cultural and political multiplicities, or guides insist on comparisons between America and the world, these limitations are inadvertently fostered by the emphasis on reader relevance in the writing and teaching of literature.

Appendix A consists of a list of the books examined, the awards won, and their respective teaching guides. Appendices B through J provide the publishers’ teaching guides.
CHAPTER 2: LOCATING TRANSCULTURAL LITERATURE IN
MULTICULTURAL AND GLOBAL EDUCATION

Transcultural literature is often confused with multicultural literature. Both promote learning about other cultures and combating social injustices. Although they may be intertwined, they are not identical. For the purpose of this study, transcultural literature refers to literature written by North Americans about the world. In other words, whereas multicultural literature is oriented towards the American *pluribus*, transcultural literature seeks to introduce American society to the world outside its borders.

This study maintains that though transcultural literature is often subsumed under the umbrella of multicultural literature, recognizing the former’s connection to the world necessitates a more specific differentiation of its socio-political context (Sims-Bishop, 1997; Mingshui Cai, 2003). From a Foucauldian perspective, the categorization of a domain indicates a discourse, or a certain way of “speaking” about it. Hence, keeping in mind differences in the socio-political contexts of multicultural and transcultural literature reorients the criteria of analysis to the concerns and goals of global education.

Even so, transcultural and multicultural literature are intertwined. No discussion on global awareness in transcultural literature can discount multiculturalism’s influence on sensitivity to non-mainstream cultures and the injustices incurred by certain ethnic groups. An historical overview of multicultural literature and education reveals an expansion of the field from national to global concerns, and from a focus on ethnicity
toward a growing advocacy for injustices with respect to race-class-gender issues. I argue that this accounts for similar preoccupations in transcultural literature. The theorizing of multicultural literature has also opened discussions on whether an outsider can offer a culturally authentic representation. This debate is particularly relevant to transcultural literature that is written by outsiders who confront problematic aspects of South Asian cultures. Although this debate has opened up dialogue between authors, readers and educators, insider/outsider polemics distract from the major concerns of cosmopolitanism and the universality of human rights across national boundaries and cultures.

Setting aside the wrangling over authenticity of cultural details, I would rather hold these texts, images and teaching guides accountable to the bigger picture of global relations. In a concerted effort to reveal how literature and pedagogical practices mediate global awareness and engagement, this study locates transcultural literature in the overlapping field of global education. The conceptual framework and concerns of global education provide the blueprint for this study. The section on global education describes the major tenets of the field, as originally delineated in Hanvey’s (1976) five dimensions for a global perspective: cross-cultural awareness, perspective consciousness, knowledge of global dynamics, and awareness of human choice. The historical overview of global education reminds educators that its insistence on perspective consciousness encumbers it with the task of balancing national and global priorities. It is useful to remember that transcultural literature, written for Americans, about the world, faces a similar quandary. The chapter concludes with the recent shift toward a cosmopolitan meeting ground
between multicultural and global education, which seeks to reconcile such tensions between universalism and contextual differences.

**Defining Transcultural and Multicultural Literature**

For a definition of transcultural literature, this study draws from Pratt and Beaty’s (1999) rationale that whereas multicultural children’s literature establishes a “sense of belonging” to the cultural region in which the reader lives, transcultural literature helps them relate to the world and acquire “an awareness of a more inclusive world - global community - shared by many people” (p. 4). Multicultural literature is understood as produced and circulated within a country, and addressing a shared national discourse of cultural diversity. In the United States, multicultural literature enables the awareness and appreciation of non-mainstream cultures such as the African American, American Indian, Latino American, or Asian American. In social and political terms, multicultural literature can be understood as a response to the challenges of a nation constituted by a diverse citizenry, vying for what Charles Taylor (1994) calls the “politics of recognition” (p. 25) and equity. As Moll and Scott (1997) succinctly put it:

Multicultural literature is a category of literature that reflects the diverse life experiences, traditions, histories, values, worldviews, and perspectives of the diverse cultural groups that make up a society. (p. 185)

Thus, rather than the citizenship model of a “melting pot,” multicultural literature champions pluralism within a society, and in this case, within the overarching context of American ideals. This definition of multicultural literature has been supported by many scholars of children’s and young adult literature (Harris, 1997; Huck et al., 2001; Norton, 1999; Temple et al., 1998; Tomlinson and Lynch-Brown, 1999). Instead, literature
written by North Americans about the world is referred to as ‘transcultural,’ as defined by Pratt and Beaty (1999):

We define transcultural children’s literature as children’s books that portray peoples, cultures, and geographic regions of the world that exist outside the reader’s country. Thus, which books are deemed to be transcultural is relative to the reader’s own home culture and geographic region. (p. 2)

When considered as separate from multicultural literature, transcultural literature is a subcategory of global literature\(^4\). In *Breaking Boundaries with Global Literature*, Hadaway (2007) defines global literature as including multicultural and international literature:

Our definition of global literature is a comprehensive and inclusive one, representing literature that honors and celebrates diversity, both within and outside the United States, in terms of culture, race, ethnicity, language, religion, social and economic status, sexual orientation, and physical and intellectual ability. (p.5)

By virtue of this definition, global literature includes international literature imported from other countries, multicultural literature, which addresses cultural diversity

\(^4\) Global literature is not to be confused with the term “globalized literature” which speaks to the view that in today’s contracted marketplace, where authors and illustrators collaborate across borders, and publishing houses have an international reach, children across the world have access to a globalized literature. See Tomlinson (1998) for examples of successful co-publications, with particular praise for UNESCO’s Asian-Pacific Co-publication Program (pp. 21-22).
within a society, and transcultural literature, which is localized in other countries but is written by outsiders. The focus of this study is the third category.

![Classification of global literature](image)

**Figure 1: Classification of global literature**

Notwithstanding the contextual differences between transcultural and multicultural literature, the former is often viewed through the frame of multicultural literature (Cai and Bishop, 1994; Rochman, 1993). Even when transcultural literature is acknowledged as a separate category, meriting specific tools of analysis, it is elaborated as an extension of multicultural literature (Pratt and Beaty, 1999). This continued intersection necessitates a deeper analysis of how multiculturalism is conceptualized and debated. It is an important excursus that reveals how multicultural literature and education have influenced the narration and teaching of social transformation in developing countries.

**Multiculturalism**

Multiculturalism proposed a pluralist model of citizenship (referred to as the “salad bowl” or “mosaic”), rather than the monocultural, homogenizing American “melting pot.” Multiculturalism finds its forbearers in the ethnic movements of the 1960s,
its voice in the Civil Rights Movement, and its national political model in cultural pluralism. Issues regarding the assimilation of immigrants also motivated a greater sensitivity to ethnicity, racism, culture, language, and learning styles of ethnic and socio-economic minority groups. This inclusive model of nationhood is closely related to multicultural literature and multicultural education’s goals. Multicultural literature counteracts a history of literary representations that distorted or omitted the marginalized, be it with respect to race, culture, gender, or class. In education, multiculturalism decisively re-conceptualized curricular perspectives and teacher education programs (Banks, 1993). James and Cherry Banks (1997) define multiculturalism as:

. . . a philosophical position and movement that assumes that the gender, ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity of a pluralistic society should be reflected in all of its institutionalized structures but especially in educational institutions, including the staff, norms and values, curriculum and student body. (p 182)

Carl Grant (1994) defines multicultural education as a concept and educational process built upon “the philosophical ideals of freedom, justice, equality, equity, and human dignity that are contained in United States documents such as the Constitution and Declaration of Independence” (p. 4). Social justice and transformation are at the core of multiculturalism. The following historical overview of multicultural literature will highlight the post-1989 debate and developments.
**Historical overview of multicultural literature and education.**

Literature about the American *pluribus* existed long before the concept of multicultural literature. NAACP’s “The Brownies Books” was published by none other than W.E.B. DuBois, and Puerto Rican writer Pura Belpré⁵ wrote *Peres and Martino* in 1932. But, it is only during the socio-political climate of the civil rights and feminist movements in the 1960s and 1970s that the representation of race, class, and gender began to be critically assessed. The term multicultural literature is associated with this growing need for a more diverse, just, and culturally conscious children’s literature. This radical shift in awareness is usually traced to Nancy Larrick’s groundbreaking 1965 article “The All-White World of Children’s Books” (Botelho and Rudman, 2009; Gilton, 2007). Larrick - a founder of the International Reading Association and The Council on Interracial Books for Children - noted that African Americans were usually portrayed as slaves, sharecroppers, and manual laborers. As a result of the social movements of the time, and articles like Larrick’s, this period saw the emergence of new publishing houses.

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⁵ The Pura Belpré Award, established in 1996 by the American Library Association (ALA), is presented to a Latino/Latina writer and illustrator whose work best portrays the Latino cultural experience in an outstanding work of literature for children and youth. For an overview of multicultural book awards, see *Ethnic Book Awards: A Directory of Multicultural Literature for Young Readers*, by Sherry York, Worthington, OH: Linworth Books, (2005).
organizations, awards and journals that supported the publishing of multicultural literature (York, 2005).

By the late 1980s and early 1990s, multiculturalism’s recognition of cultural minorities, had entered historiography (Takaki, 1993), the philosophical and political (Gutman, 1994), was firmly established in the pedagogical (Banks, 1993), and had acquired agency in the arena of social justice and critical pedagogy, with the works of Carl Grant, Christine Sleeter, Geneva Gay, Peter McLaren, Henry Giroux and Sonia Nieto. Increasingly, the theory and praxis underpinning multicultural literature became closely allied with multicultural education’s clarion call to include underrepresented marginalized minorities, eradicate discrimination, resist stereotypical representations, and promote social transformation (Bishop, 1997; Cai, 2002; Harris, 1997). Rather than just cultural diversity, multicultural education extended its reach to race, class and gender inequities. As a movement, multicultural education championed a personal, institutional, and collective transformation that actively promoted educational equity, school reform, culturally responsive teaching, prejudice reduction, and the awareness of how knowledge was constructed (Banks and Banks, 2003; Gay, 1995; Grant and Sleeter, 2003; Nieto, 2002).

Literature became the right arm of multicultural education. As Carl Grant (1997) puts it, “Literature is one of the foundational subject areas of multicultural education” (p. xii). In such a climate, Mingshui Cai (1995), maintained that the purpose of multicultural children’s literature should be “to give voice to those who have been historically silenced, to represent those who have been under represented, and to give true faces back to those
whose images have been distorted” (p. 14). Thus, though the early conceptualization of multicultural literature emphasized race, culture, and ethnicity, by the mid-1990s the genre included issues regarding gender, class, sexual orientation, age, religion, and geographical location (Botelho and Rudman, 2009, p. 82). Violet Harris (1996) observed that, as against multiethnic literature, multicultural literature can include “race, ethnicity, gender, class, and other elements that denote difference” (p. 109). This expansion of multicultural literature’s concerns is closely reflected in transcultural literature.

Multicultural literature also extended its borders. Rather than limited to “people of color” in the United States, the theorizing of multicultural literature grew to include the marginalized and silenced all over the world. This broadening scope of multicultural literature is exemplified in Hazel Rochman’s (1993) comments. In exile from South African apartheid, Rochman vehemently opposed an emphasis on a particular race and ethnicity. In her book Against Borders: Promoting Books for a Multicultural World, she maintained that multiculturalism means “across cultures, against borders” (p. 9). Likewise, in Global Voices, Global Visions: A Core Collection of Multicultural Books, Lyn Miller-Lachmann (1995) defines multicultural literature as embracing “every inhabited region of the world. Just as the works of African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos and Native Americans have broadened awareness of the culture and history of the United States, the writings of authors in other countries have offered a deeper understanding of the world that lies beyond this country’s borders” (p. xiv). Within this generous framework, her annotated compilation includes books written in the United States and abroad.
Multicultural education and literature’s goal of social transformation and empowerment, and its scrutiny of sociopolitical contexts brought the field closer to the tenets and praxis of critical pedagogy, giving rise to what is referred to as critical multiculturalism. Kincheloe and Steinberg (2001) define critical multiculturalism as focusing on how “racism, sexism, and class bias are economically, semiotically (pertaining to encoded and symbolic representations of particular groups), politically, educationally, and institutionally produced” (p. 29). Geneva Gay (1995), Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren (1989), Sonia Nieto (2002), and Christine Sleeter and Peter McLaren (1995) were among those who exposed the socio-political context of education, furthered the examination of how knowledge is constructed, its distortions, inaccuracies, and omissions, and championed the renewed need for social transformation.

Reading with a critical multicultural lens acknowledges that textual and visual representations are historical and cultural products that bear an ideological discourse. Hade (1997) offers the most succinct description of what constitutes a multicultural reading of texts. According to Hade, multiculturalism is about “challenging mainstream discourse” (p.252), and a multiculturally conscious reader should ask:

How do authors use race, class, and gender to mean? What assumptions about race, class, and gender do they ask us to take on? What assumptions do we bring to text? We do not always need to read with an author; we can also read against an author, questioning and even refusing to become the kind of sympathetic readers of their stories that authors ask us to become. (p. 252)

Recognizing the nexus between the social construction of knowledge through text and image, and power relations in society (and the world), leads to two major questions that bear on how we write and read about other cultures, nations, and peoples: How are
other cultures represented? Who has the right to represent a culture? The latter is commonly referred to as the insider/outsider debate.

“Stereotyping as a signifying practice” (Hall, 2000, p. 257).

The textual and visual representation of black, Native Americans, other minorities, and alien cultures has had a long history of omissions and distortions that falls in line with the dominant socio-political discourses of the time. The theorists of multicultural literature challenged the perpetuation of these biased representations. Theoretically, the analysis of representation – meaning-making through language, discourse, and image – is also associated with the Cultural Studies’ movement of the 1970s. Committed to the struggle over meaning in representational practices (During, 1993; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2001), Cultural Studies’ proponents like Stuart Hall (2000) draw from anthropology, sociology, art history and Foucauldian theories to analyze how representation is implicated in the production of knowledge, and power. Similarly, Edward Said, (1979) in his influential book, Orientalism, combines the frameworks of literary criticism with cultural studies, Foucauldian analysis, and the Lacanian Other⁶, in ________________

⁶ The resilience of stereotypical representations is linked to the Lacanian concept of the Other. Psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan argued that rather than the notion of an autonomous individual identity invested with free will and choice, the subject is always created in his/ her encounter with the other. Lacan called the [capital O] Other the great Other, in whose gaze the subject gains identity. When cultural or literary critics use the term "Other" they refer to the ways in which one group declares another group
order to scrutinize how the West’s re-presentation of the “oriental” created a body of knowledge that served their geo-political interests. Marrying cultural studies and critical pedagogy, Giroux (1989) called for pedagogy of and for difference, so that educators can “come to understand theoretically how difference is constructed through various representations and [pedagogical] practices” (p. 142). In my analysis, I too am concerned with the politics of representation in texts and images, as well the validation of difference in teaching guides.

One of the most influential studies on cultural and racial representation in multicultural children’s literature was done by Rudine Sims (1982) in a National Council of Teachers for English (NCTE) publication, *Shadow and Substance: Afro-American Experience in Contemporary Children’s Fiction*. Sims organizes 150 contemporary realistic books into three main categories: socially conscience, melting pot, and culturally conscience. She demonstrates that in the late 1950s and 1960s there was an influx of books aimed at developing the social consciousness of white children, “to encourage them to develop empathy, sympathy, and tolerance for Afro-American children and their problems” (p.17). Sims concludes that the best of the socially conscience books are not

“Other” and thereby excludes or marginalizes them. One way of doing this is through selective representations.
tainted by heavy moralizing (especially by a white protagonist), patronization, and tokenism (p. 30). The “melting pot” category addressed the tension within the *e pluribus unum* idea, which was pulled between viewing the nation as a homogenous monocultural unit or as comprising of diverse cultures. A satisfactory solution was often presented in a color-blind “melting pot” social model. In contrast, “culturally conscious” books, written primarily by African Americans, reflected and illuminated “both the uniqueness and universal humanness of the Afro-American experience from the perspective of an Afro-American child or family” (p. 15). After more than 25 years, it is still relevant to wonder if transcultural literature narrates the ‘problematic’ Third World in order to stoke the social consciousness of the reader.

There is another aspect to literature’s complicity in the construction of knowledge and social practice. Joel Taxel’s (1986) content analysis of three award winning books - Ouida Sebestyen’s (1979) *Words by Heart*, Paula Fox’s (1973) *The Slave Dancer*, and Mildred Taylor’s (1976) *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* - deploys Raymond Williams’ (1977) concept of a “selective tradition” that legitimates “the worldviews and ideological perspectives of those occupying positions of socioeconomic preeminence in society” (Taxel, 1986, p. 254), to shed light on how children’s books reflect a struggle over a society’s values and assumptions. In the process, the ‘selected’ canonic body of literature creates an ideological consensus on what constitutes legitimate knowledge. Award winning books, by virtue of their institutional recognition, would gain easier access to this selective tradition.
Though Sims’s study was with specific reference to the representation of African Americans, the polemics she brought to light provide guidance for the analysis of any literature written about other cultures, nations and peoples. Drawing from her framework, it is opportune to keep in mind the mission civilatrice of some socially conscious books, the insider/outsider perspective, and the representation of culture. Taxel’s (1986) recognition of the link between award winning books and a canonic “selective tradition” has guided this study’s focus on award-winning books.

**Cultural authenticity and the insider/outsider debate.**

Fully aware of how vilified, stereotyped, or neutralized representations serve the socio-political agenda of the dominant culture, minority authors and scholars questioned the credentials of writers who view cultures from the outside. In short, can outsiders represent cultures in an authentic manner? The question is even more relevant in the case of transcultural literature, which is written by “outsiders” about another culture in another country.

Harris (1997) defines authenticity as “whether or not the depiction of the characters seems accurate or rings true in relations to their physical appearance, and to their culture” (p.16). Most criteria consider the accuracy of details, the lack of stereotyping and misrepresentations (Fox and Short, 2003, p.18), the portrayal of diversity within a culture (Harris (1997, p.18), and the responsibility of the author to research and provide thorough source notes (Hearne, 1993, 39(7)). In contrast, Mo and Shen (2003) propose that “authenticity is not just accuracy or the avoidance of stereotyping but involves cultural values and issues/practices that are accepted as norms
of the social group” (p. 200). Mo and Shen’s (2003) call for a collective representation of socially accepted group norms is particularly problematic since it seems to be at odds with the need to portray diversity within cultures. Cai (1997) argues that if one considers that meaning-making is a transaction between the text and reader, then in keeping with multiculturalism’s goals, the author’s cultural provenance is not as important as the readers’ responses to their works. According to him, authors should take responsibility for the social effects their works may have produced (p. 210). This study will not be concerned with evaluating whether the book’s representation of a certain culture is “authentic.” Indeed, such an argument would undercut the notion of a dynamic culture. I am more interested in analyzing if cultural traditions are problematized, and how these issues are resolved.

The debate over cultural authenticity is closely linked to the dispute over whether outsiders can or should speak about other cultures. In other words, to what extent does an author or illustrator’s cultural identity and perspective lend authenticity to the artistic creation? To begin with there is the issue of identity and what came to be known as “identity politics.” Bromley (1997) explains that scholars who saw identity (of race, culture, gender) as a basis for politics shared the tenet that “different experiences lead to different knowledge appeals” (p. 137). According to the strictures of identity politics, only insiders have the experience to represent oppressed groups.

The 1990s witnessed a contentious insider/outsider debate in journals such as The Horn Book Magazine, and The New Advocate. As a reminder that the storm has not abated, Fox and Short (2003) recently compiled many of these essays (some were
updated) in *Stories Matter: the Complexity of Cultural Authenticity in Children’s Literature*. Clearly, as long as different sociopolitical contexts remain, the altercation over who can represent cultures authentically, and who has the right to speak for the dispossessed subaltern will remain (Spivak, 1988).

It is not within the purview of this study to fully recount the ins and outs of the insider/outsider controversy. In broad terms it can be reduced to three issues: (1) conflicting viewpoints on the importance of artistic imagination and license versus cultural experience (Cai, 2002); (2) a question of ethnic identity tied to a group’s right to representation; (3) a debate on whether the commonalities of humanity can supersede cultural identity (Aronson, 1995; Rochman, 1993). As a response to this ongoing debate, Violet Harris’s article entitled “Continuing Dilemmas, Debates, and Delights in Multicultural Literature” (1996) reminds readers that the storm over who can write about what culture is rooted in a history of distorted representations of minorities, and that the very goal of the multicultural literature movement was in fact to give voice to those who have been historically underrepresented, misrepresented, or silenced (pp. 107-122). In the 2003 updated version of her 1996 paper, Harris’s comment on race, ethnicity and gender stratifications bears particular relevance to transcultural literature in today’s globalized world:

These experiences are all the more poignant as we struggle with conflicting ideas about national identity, religious freedom, tolerance, and our place in a world community made seemingly smaller by technology in the wake of the tragedy of September 11, 2001. (p. 117)
To recapitulate, in this study the issue will not be whether outsiders should or should not write about other cultures and nations. Indeed, considering the scarcity of imported books, this would amount to a virtual moratorium. Secondly, in the case of human rights issues or geopolitical areas where North America (US and Canada) is actively involved, literary sanctions based on geographical borders are meaningless. It would, however, be interesting to note differences in how authors of South Asian origin display cultural dynamism and problematic issues such as human rights violations, gender inequities, or the tussle between tradition and modernity.

**The politics of multiculturalism.**

Regardless of whether one supported or dismissed the insider or outsider debate, all proponents of multicultural education and multicultural literature defended the voice of the marginalized, and sought to disassemble power relations in the construct of race, class, and gender differences (Bishop, 1997; Cai, 1995; Harris, 1996; Nieto, 2002). The extent to which multiculturalism is imbricated in the struggle over representation, identity, and knowledge construction reflects its political implications. Responding to the charge that multiculturalism was politically motivated, Goldberg (1996) responded:

> Multiculturalism critique is indeed political in the sense of undertaking to redefine the public values constitutive of the polis, of the state in which we live, to make those values more open to incorporative transformation. But it is political insofar as the struggle over representative values has always been political. (pp.11-12)

In this sense, multiculturalism and its literature is political in the way all narratives and institutions distribute the social goods of gender, race, culture, education, and knowledge (Gee, 2006). While the political innuendos of multicultural literature
implied a shared American civic model of pluralism and “values more open to
incorporative transformation,” transcultural literature (about ways of life in other
countries) poses a problem. Written by and for an American audience, how we read
these books raises the questions: How can an unfamiliar socio-cultural and economic
milieu be reconciled with a common framework that the reader can relate to? Will it
reach out to the implied reader’s worldview? Or, will it, as Hade (1997) recommended,
invoke a critical habit of mind by challenging assumptions, representations and
“mainstream discourse” (p. 252). The following analysis of transcultural literature
underscores how this tension between human universals and a critical viewpoint has
played out.

Transcultural Literature
Transcultural literature is written by outsiders on “peoples, cultures, and
geographic regions of the world that exist outside the reader’s country (Pratt and Beaty,
1999, p. 2). I suggest that studies on transcultural literature can be broadly divided into
three approaches: a universalistic perspective of commonalities and personal connections
that ‘bridge’ differences; a critical analysis that holds up a ‘mirror’ to the encoded socio-
political discourses in this literature; and an approach that uses fiction as a ‘window’ to
the world, thereby integrating global awareness in the curriculum (Lakshmanan, 2009).
Each approach leads to a different question. The universalistic perspective asks: How can
the reader connect to the text, above and beyond socio-cultural and experiential
differences? A critical analysis asks: How is power enacted? And a global awareness
perspective asks: What can the text tell me about the world?
The bridge of commonalities and personal connections.

The idea of universalisms is based on the premise that all human beings share a common core of humanity that transcends any socio-cultural context. In his landmark essay “The Politics of Recognition,” Charles Taylor describes the “politics of universalism” as “emphasizing the equal dignity of all citizens” and the “equalization of rights and entitlements” (1994, p.37). By contrast, particularism (a charge often levied against multiculturalism) is identified with the notion of identity and the “politics of difference.” Taylor argues that liberalism’s “difference-blind” universalism runs the risk of imposing a false homogeneity that undermines the recognition of difference. The tension between particular group identities and human universals is evident at both ends of the political spectrum. Critical multiculturalists Kincheloe and Steinberg (2001) accuse “liberal” color-blind multiculturalism of an over-emphasis on human universals: “When all is washed away, they believe that people’s common humanity will illustrate that men and women and various ethnicities share more commonalities than differences” (p.10). In short, in order to understand the perceived other, all you need to be is human. Kincheloe and Steinberg (2001) contend that the emphasis on personal connections despite culture-class-gender differences, decontextualizes and depoliticizes issues surrounding this triad, and fails to examine how privilege and domination come about.

From the universalistic perspective, transcultural books are predominantly seen through the lens of themes and personal characteristics common to all humans, regardless of culture, nation, or circumstance. As the afore-mentioned theorists of global literature observed (Hadaway, 2007; Stan, 2002), this perspective looks at books as “bridges”
which connect diverse worldviews. From this point of view, the primary question is: *How can the reader connect to the text, above and beyond socio-cultural and experiential differences?* Freeman and Lehman (2001) use universal thematic categories such as friendship, personal struggle, culture and death. *Across Cultures* (East and Thomas, 2007), which is largely an annotated bibliography, has a section on “knowing today’s world.” Discussions gravitate around themes like loyalty, survival, families and friendship. If common human themes serve as a “bridge” across cultures, so do the attributes of characters. Rosann Jweid and Margaret Rizzo (2004) present a selection of novels from various cultures and nations, foregrounding protagonists who exemplify strength of character and the positive personal values, common to all humanity.

Similarly, Giorgis, Mathis and Bedford (2007) look for “strong females in the global tapestry” of stories. It would appear that the focus on an individual’s agency is taken as evidence of a possible challenge to systems, and its eventual transformation.

The issues approach offers yet another bridge, which is less personal and more social. Rudman (1995) in *Children’s Literature: an Issues Approach*, proposes “a critical examination of the books in the light of how they treat contemporary problems and conditions” as a valuable addition to a literary perspective (p. 2). The issues tackled include divorce, sexuality, gender roles, heritage, abuse, war and peace. According to this viewpoint, the expansive mirror of humanity allows the readers to find themselves in the text, regardless of socio-cultural differences.

Some scholars claim that the emphasis on an individual protagonist masks an ideological agenda. Catherine Belsey (1980) argues that the Leavisite tradition that
celebrates the intentionality of characters, failed to expose the ideologies which inform
textual representations. In the liberal humanist tradition, individuals are meaning-makers
of history. Belsey claimed that the reverse is true. Sarland (1999), in his paper “Ideology,
Politics, and Children’s Literature” also contrasts a Leavisite, “liberal humanist” tradition
of literary criticism that emphasizes the character’s personality as the source of action,
regardless of context. Belsey (1980) and Sarland’s (1999) argument comes to the fore in
narratives about an individual’s conflict with socio-economic and cultural systems.

Seehwa Cho (2006, pp. 129-132) points out that this celebration of everyday,
individual forms of resistance reflects post 1970s identity politics that upheld the subject,
and challenged the Marxist praxis, which tended to neglect other forms of domination
(gender, race, sexuality) in favor of class. According to Cho, multiculturalism, the
feminists, and the gay and lesbian movement, are all forms of resistance in which “the
personal is political” shifted the coalition of struggle from the community to the
individual’s agency. With respect to critical pedagogy, Cho observes that “the dominant
versions of critical pedagogy treat the individual as the unit to be conscientized and
proposed allocating greater agency to individuals as the way forward” (p. 133).

Considering children’s and young adult literature’s proclivity towards a first person
narrative which focalizes attention on the actions of an individual (Stephens, 1992),
Cho’s appraisal of critical pedagogy’s “individual project” is especially relevant:

I argue that critical pedagogy is in a serious crisis because the political projects of
critical pedagogy have been too narrowly focused on the individualized,
moralized, and cultural politics of difference. This trend, I believe, poses a grave
danger, especially considering the imperialistic globalization that is rapidly
happening. Rather than going back to the body, the individual, and the subject,
with which Western thought has been so thoroughly plagued, critical pedagogy, in its search for “possibilities,” needs to explore and produce real, feasible alternatives by linking the micro to the macro, the subject to the structure, the culture to the economy, and the local to the global. (Cho, 2006, p. 138)

Scholars who recognize the resonance of macro global discourses in transcultural literature do so from two angles: (1) a critical postcolonial and neocolonial analysis (2) and as a means to further the reader’s global awareness. The first approach is akin to the analysis of ideology in children’s literature, whereas the latter often works within global education’s framework for including a global perspective. The following sections will deal with these two perspectives.

**The critical mirror.**

Transcultural literature has a long-standing genealogy of skewed representations of the cultural other. Colonialist children’s literature has been extensively analyzed for its geo-political subtext. Much of this critique is mounted from a postcolonial and neocolonial perspective which shares the argument of scholars who recognize dominant ideological discourses at work in children’s and young adult’s literature (Harris, 2003; Hollindale, 1992; Hunt, 1999; Moynihan, 1988; Nodelman, 1992; Sarland, 1999; Sims, 1982; Stephens, 1992; Sutherland, 1985; Taxel, 1986; Trites, 2000; Zipes, 1979). Here, the question raised is akin to that of a critical multicultural lens: *How is power enacted?*

Postcolonial criticism gathered during and after the independence struggle of nations in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. It was concerned with the psychological, economic, and cultural effects of imperialism and emancipation from colonial rule. By way of literature, Habib (2008) suggests that multiculturalism can be seen as a “point of
convergence of various postcolonial projects” (p. 161). Both analytical lenses (the postcolonial and multicultural) certainly share a concern for how power is operationalized through constructs of race, culture, class, and gender. Postcolonial literary critics of children’s literature have taken up Edward Said’s ideas and applied them to children’s literature. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said (1993) shows how the novel, including children’s books by Rudyard Kipling, contributed significantly to the “structure of attitudes and references” that informed a certain hegemonic vision of the world (p. 74). Literature’s connivance in the molding of future citizens of the world is brought out by Daphne Kutzer (2000), who investigates reflections of imperialism in British children’s literature from the late nineteenth century to the beginning of World War II.

As an ideological construct, enmeshed in relations of power, children’s and young adult literature bear the dominant values of a historical time, even if sometimes discernible only in retrospect. Perhaps the most emblematic example of the politics of representation in children’s literature is Helen Bannerman’s (1899) *The Story of Little Black Sambo*. Notwithstanding a seemingly inoffensive plot, the story and its illustrations are replete with stereotypical imagery and judgmental dichotomies. Critics continue to uncover more subtle expressions of ‘white’ moral superiority. For example, Jean de Brunhoff’s Babar stories now come across as an embarrassing colonial discourse on class, race, and the civilizing West (Kohl, 1995).

Edward Said also drew attention to the subordinating effects of an Orientalist representation (1993, p. 95). Margaret Chang (2005) applies Said’s notion of Orientalism
to assess images of China in modern American children’s books. She concludes that “Children’s books writers and artists shaped by the intellectual genealogy of chinoiserie maintain this fixed Western gaze, able to see only what has been written and described previously, not what is before their eyes” (p. 56). Chang suggests that writers and artists should be aware that they are working within a pervasive “intellectual genealogy.” Yang and Fang’s (2005) analysis of Laurence Yep’s novels on China, also applies Edward Said’s cultural criticism and postcolonial critic Chandra T. Mohanty’s call for “political consciousness.” They contend that the pedagogical practices of reading literature about other cultures have tended to use them as “disembodied texts primarily for the purpose of contextualizing ethnicity” (p. 194). Instead, Yang and Fang encourage readers to go beyond the plot and pay close attention to the social, historic, economic, cultural, and political contexts within which an author and his/her work is situated. Only then, can students understand the “multiple subjectivities, discourses, and power structures encoded in the multicultural work they read” (p.194). Rashna Singh (2004) offers a Gramscian and Foucauldian reading of British and American children’s literature to show how character building - via narrative focalization - became an essential instrument in training empire builders. Her analysis includes an examination of contemporary American children’s literature in which the cultural other is merely representational and devoid of any proactive self-determination.

The term neocolonialism has now gained currency. Roderick McGillis edited Voice of the Other (2000) with the goal of confronting the past and admitting “neocolonialism’s intricate connection to postcolonialism in our present world” (p. xi). In
his introduction, McGillis describes neocolonialism as a “renewed drive on the part of the dominant social and cultural forces to maintain their positions of privilege” in the developing world (p. xxiv). He adds that in children’s literature, a neocolonial mind-set can be detected in the portrayal of minorities as “inveterately other and inferior in some ways to the dominant European or Eurocentric culture, or as an appropriation of minority cultures into the mainstream way of thinking” (xxiv). In the same vein, Yulisa A. Maddy and Donnarae MacCann (1996) apply a neocolonial sensitivity in *African Images in Juvenile Literature*. The authors pose the question “Where is Africa in the minds of the authors?” Maddy and MacCann come to the conclusion that “a neocolonialist message permeates Western novels [on Africa] for young people” (p. 138), through the persistent image of a monolithic African “backwardness” and lack of competence.

An approach that refracts transcultural literature through a critical mirror, would question the persistent “selective tradition” of representing the other as inadequate and therefore at the behest of the “social consciousness” (Sims, 1982) of the reader. Rather than adopt the subject position of the implied reader, a critical analysis challenges the reader to examine how their assumptions are related to macro social and global discourses. The need to be self-reflective becomes all the more urgent when literature is used in the classroom as a springboard for social activism in the world (Hadaway, 2007; McKenna, 2006; Rogers, 1999; Yokota & Kolar, 2008).

**The window to the world.**

As a ‘window’ to the world transcultural literature is used to support global education in the classroom (Freeman and Lehman, 2001; Glasgow and Rice, 2007; Ladd,
Pratt and Beaty (1999), in *Transcultural Children’s Literature* (1999) propose a cultural paradigm consisting of four elements which are inherent in every culture: geographic location, social systems, economic and political systems. According to the authors, an in-depth understanding of these four forces of cultural development is important in order to understand and effectively use transcultural children’s literature in the classroom.

Other scholars are more oriented towards problems with global implications (Glasgow and Rice, 2007; Ladd, 1993; Thompson, 1993). In *Exploring African Life and Literature* (2007) Jacqueline Glasgow and Linda Rice (2007) show educators how traditional African folk tales, children’s books, young adult novels, classic literature, and films about Africa can support an awareness of issues such as the struggle of Arab women to lead self-determining lives, human rights in South Africa, and the rites of passage for young girls in Central Africa. The authors squarely position the novels in their historical and social context, and theorize the use of transcultural (and international) literature within the framework of global education. Glasgow and Rice propose a four-part conceptual framework for teaching a global perspective through literature: “(1) conceptualize global education, (2) acquire global content, (3) experience cross-cultural learning, and (4) develop a pedagogy for teaching and assessing global perspectives based on content knowledge and cultural experiences” (p. 6). To this end, the authors combine discussions that provoke critical thinking, a cultural response approach that
challenges preconceived notions about a culture, and social action that will enable students “to make a positive difference in the world” (p. 12). A lacuna in Glasgow and Rice’s book and other scholarly works is the lack of attendance to an important dimension of a global perspective, viz. understanding “theories and concepts that may increase intelligent consciousness of global change” (Hanvey, 1976, p. 13). Locating literature within the field of global education begs a deeper understanding of the field’s history and key concepts. Only then, can transcultural literature be read through a critical global perspective that conciliates the connecting bridge, the window, and the critical mirror.

**Global Education**

Educators often see multicultural and global education as complementary (Banks et al., 2005; Cole, 1984; Merryfield, 1996). Both fields share a concern for cross-cultural understanding, immigration, prejudice reduction, and human rights. Both fields solicit a reflection of one’s core beliefs and assumptions, regard knowledge as a socio-cultural construction, work towards developing an understanding of power’s “role in the process of knowledge construction” (Merryfield and Wilson, 2005), and are concerned with the perspective of the “other” (Cole, 1984). In spite of this overlap, the two domains have different contexts; multicultural education frames these topics within the context of the student’s nation, whereas global education “examines these topics in countries other than the student’s nation of residence” (Diaz et al, 1999, p. 3). Some scholars maintain that this distinction is significant, especially since it is often blurred in the theoretical framing of multicultural literature, and its classroom practice (Diaz et al., 1993, p. 2).
In pedagogical terms, global education seeks to integrate an awareness of contemporary global issues and challenges into the curriculum. Global education, in its broadest sense, addresses issues facing all of humanity, regardless of nation and culture (Anderson, 1990; Becker, 1979; Diaz et al., 1999; Hanvey, 1976; Kniep, 1986; Merryfield, 1996; Pike and Selby, 1988; Tye and Tye, 1992).

By way of content and approach, global education is transdisciplinary. That the conceptualization of global education grew out of contributions from a cultural anthropologist (Robert Hanvey), political scientists (Chadwick Alger and James Harf), and citizenship educators (Lee Anderson, James Becker), reflects the transdisciplinary nature of the field. As William Gaudelli (2003) points out, “global education is often described as an amalgamation, a new field emerging from various loci (e.g., international relations, cultural studies, environmental study, economics)” (p.6). At best, it can be described as a field that draws from a number of disciplines: international education, multicultural education, peace education, inter-cultural studies, development education, human rights education, international affairs, and global citizenship (Diaz et al., 1999; Sylvester, 2007).

**Why global education?**

The rationale for integrating global awareness in the curriculum addresses the fundamental link between schooling and a changing world. Fore-fronting national priorities, some scholars see the need for global education in competitive terms (Smith, 1994; Collins, Czarra & Smith, 1998). Referring to the shift from a bi-polar to a multi-dimensional world, and America’s role in world affairs, Andrew F. Smith (1994), warns
that “The victors of this new global challenge are likely to be those who have the requisite competencies and skills necessary to take advantage of the opportunities while avoiding the difficulties inherent within this new global age” (p. 1). In the vocabulary of globalization, global competence is often synonymous with maintaining an economic edge.

Lee Anderson (1990) and Howard Gardner (2004) make a more historical argument for why pedagogy should change. In “A Rationale for Global Education,” Anderson (1990) reminds us that educational processes are not isolated from the economics, politics, demography, and culture of a society. With this indisputable premise, Anderson makes a compelling argument for a global education which would be in sync with the current changes in the world. Anderson concludes that “we have no chance but to press on with the task of globalizing American education” (p. 33). Howard Gardner (2004) offers a historical trajectory, illustrating parallelisms between changes in education and shifts in values: from religious to secular, followed by the influence of scientific findings on the mind (such as psychometrics, or the psychology of cognitive development), and broader historical and social forces like globalization. Or as White (2001), succinctly put it: “Theoretically, global education is the socialization process into globalization.”

**Historical overview of global education.**

Just as multicultural education addressed national challenges, global education was conceptualized as a response to global changes in the 1970s. Gaudelli (2003) maintains that global education grew out of an increased sense of planetary
interdependence, as well as the proliferation of international organizations to deal with global issues. The world was shrinking, and global education responded with its paradigm of interdependence and interconnectedness.

The 1970s saw a flourishing in the international, national and regional leadership of global education (Hill, 2007). This global perspective is reflected in international organizations, in school curricula, and the proliferation of institutions and publications. During the mid 1970s, The National Endowment for the Humanities awarded a major grant to the Center for Teaching International Relations (CTIR) of the University of Denver, to help conceptualize the field of global education. Most significantly, the project is merited with coining the word ‘global perspectives,’ an important concept in the field. In 1976, the Center changed its name to Global Perspectives in Education. Global issues and challenges were no longer isolated phenomena of certain nations, but part of an interconnected world system. For the project, the anthropologist Robert Hanvey (1976) developed a short paper, “An Attainable Global Perspective” which “galvanized thinking about the field in a way that no single previous document did” (Smith, 1994, p. 11). Till today, Hanvey’s theoretical framework remains a benchmark guide (Kirkwood, 2001). His model organized global education into 5 dimensions:

1. **Perspective consciousness**: the need to probe the “the deep layers of perspective,” underlying assumptions, evaluations, explanations, and conceptions which direct our perspective.
2. **State-of-the-Planet awareness**: issues such as population, migration, economics, science & technology, conflict, resources, environment, politics, health, and law.
3. **Cross-cultural awareness**: the need to be aware of the diversity of ideas and practices, and that our own culture can be viewed from another perspective,
and the need to cultivate a “global psyche” that travels comfortably beyond the confines of one’s own culture.

(4) *Knowledge of global dynamics*: the need to be aware and comprehend that the world is a system which works according to the principles, and patterns of change characteristic of the times, and a comprehension of “theories and concepts that may increase intelligent consciousness of global change.” (p. 13)

(5) *Awareness of human choices*: “awareness of the problems of choice confronting individuals, nations, and the human species as consciousness and knowledge of the global system expands,” and that takes into account that “other peoples and future generations have rights.” (pp. 22-23)

Hanvey’s call for perspective consciousness has remained one of the key characteristics of a global perspective. With respect to this study, the 5 domains of a ‘global perspective’ is the blueprint for a critical reading of transcultural literature that is concerned with today’s challenges and issues, while considering alternative perspectives, exposing underlying assumptions, and including controversial issues (Diaz et al., 1999; Lamy, 1991). Its recognition that circulating theories and concepts impinge on one’s consciousness of the world, recognizes the social construction of knowledge. And its transdisciplinary connection with development education, human rights, and International Relations theories provide alternative perspectives through which to read transcultural literature.
Other early advocates of global education, such as Lee Anderson (1979) and James Becker (1979), framed global education as citizenship education for a global age. Becker (1979) proposed that the “goal of global education should be the recognition of the need for a wider and more varied human identity than has been provided by the nation-state in the past” (p. 24). Lee Anderson also argues for a more inclusive notion of identity and citizenship. In *Schooling and Citizenship in a Global Age* (1979), Anderson situated his rationale for a global education in terms of the relationship between education and society, citizenship, and the “global age:” According to him:

> Global education consists of efforts to bring about changes in the content, in the methods, and in the social context of education in order to better prepare students for citizenship in a global age. (p 15)

More than thirty years later, scholars continue to urge that identity formation in a globalized world can no longer follow the Eriksonian model of stages, and that selfhood requires the cultivation of fluid transcultural identities (Qin-Hillard and Suarez-Orozco, 2004).

In 1976, Hanvey prefaced his monograph with the need “to cope with the challenges of an increasingly interdependent world,” but by the early 1980s the full

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7 The NCSS confers an annual Award for Global Understanding in honor of James M. Becker Award.
economic, cultural, and political implications of this interdependence were being experienced. The price of crude oil rose, inflation, Iran, the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, and the airing on American TV of “The Death of a Princess” which drew remonstrance from the Saudi Arabians, all reminded Americans that they were in fact living in a globalized society (Condon, 1980; Gilliom, 1981). Struck by the increasing extent and impact of global interdependence, educators advocated the urgent need “to prepare citizens for effective participation in a global, transnational society” (Gilliom, 1981, p. 163). National economic and political priorities took over. The NCSS’s 1982 Position Statement on Global Education warns of the potential danger of human interaction:

> Increased human interactions across national and continental boundaries increase the potential for both cooperation and conflict. The day to day lives of average citizens, as well as the destinies of nations, are being influenced by our growing international, cross-cultural links. (NCSS, 1982, p. 36)

In this scenario, education stressed international economic competitiveness rather than international cooperation and understanding (Fujikame, 2003, p. 140). The publication of A Nation at Risk (1983) triggered a critique of global education as a “frill” advocating “one worldism” (Lamy, 1991). Perhaps the most virulent attack was Greg Cunningham’s widely circulated report, entitled “Blowing the Whistle on Global Education” (1986). It was a review of CTIR’s materials, accusing it of a politically biased “quest for a new world order” (as cited in Lamy, 1991). That same year Phyllis Schlafly wrote a vituperative article in the St. Louis Globe-Democrat, accusing global education of indoctrinating students with “the falsehood that other nations, governments, legal
systems, cultures, and economic systems are essentially equivalent to us and entitled to equal respect” (Lamy, 1991). Global educationalists responded in 1986 by forming a group called the Alliance for Education in Global and International Studies (AEGIS), with the crucial task of drafting standards for promoting a balanced approach to controversial issues. Confronting the common critique that global education was un-American, AEGIS saw no contradiction in a joint commitment to the nation and the world. Nonetheless, in spite of attempts to re-conceptualize a global perspective, the Reagan years are often characterized by a decline in official interest in the international dimension of education, if not a negative attitude toward it. The holistic vision of global interdependence seemed incompatible with patriotism, and the multiple realities emanating from a global perspective challenged cultural certitudes. In this sense, both global education and multiculturalism were accused of eroding a core national identity, be it political or cultural. The struggle to reconcile the nation to a worldview, surfaces in the narratives examined in this study.

Towards a Cosmopolitan Global Citizen

Of particular relevance to this study is the post-1989 resurgence of the politicization of ethnicity, the impact of globalization, and the confluence of multicultural and global education in a cosmopolitan model of global citizenship. By 1989, the Cold War had ended. With the United States as the only stable superpower, a new international political system was emerging. The subsequent events of the early 1990s quickly defined the nation’s role in world affairs. The decade opened with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait (1990), followed by the falling apart of Yugoslavia, the demise of the Soviet Block, the
World Trade Center explosion, genocide in Rwanda (1994), and the bombing of two American embassies in Africa (1998). Politically, the bi-polar Cold War world had given way to a far more complex and multi-polar world. The global dynamics of the close of the 20th century also reconfigured the conventional international system of nation-states, putting more weight on multinational companies, international organizations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), NGOs, and individuals. In the meantime, the idea of a World Wide Web was born, radically rewiring the networks of communication. By 1992 the Internet was available for home use. This compressed acceleration of the movement of information, along with intensified trade among countries, gave the era its buzz word: globalization. Joseph Stiglitz, (2002) describes the conditions that gave rise to globalization as:

. . . the closer integration of the countries and peoples of the world which has been brought about by the enormous reduction of costs of transportation and communication, and the breaking down of artificial barriers to the flows of goods, services, capital, knowledge, and (to a lesser extent) people across borders. (p. 9)

These global changes were mirrored in the 1990’s revival of international, multicultural and global education. By 1993, 38 states had either recommended or
mandated the inclusion of a “global perspective” in their curricula (Fonte & Ryerson, 1994). 8

Fujikame (2003) attributes the post 1990’s resurgence in global education to the “vocabulary of globalization.” Fujikame claims that a “discontinuity can be thus identified in people’s views about the world before the 1990s and after” (p. 140). He identifies three new worldviews that relate to revised educational directives: a stress on human interdependence, a diversification of actors on the world stage who compete with nation-states for a citizen’s political allegiance, and a growing sense of moral “oneness” that transcends national boundaries.

Immigration and increased trans-continental movement was yet another effect of globalization. By the 1990s, The United States was witnessing a peak in immigration, comparable to the 1920s. Except this time, globalization was changing immigration trends, and the notion of transnationalism had gained currency. No longer was immigration exclusively viewed as forsaking the country of origin. In the field of global

8 The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education’s 1994 brochure (AACTE 1994), and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education 1995 Guidelines (NCATE 1995) included a “global perspective.” In the AACTE 1994 brochure, “Teacher Education in Global and International Education,” the need to teach global systems, global issues, and to pay more attention to diverse and universal human values, was already ascribed to globalization (Merryfield, Jarchow, & Pickert, 1997, p. 5).
education, Baker (1999) points out that educators should pay attention to the relationship between ethnicity and world affairs, and the transnational connections that still exist between foreign cultures and United States’ ethnic groups.

Baker’s (1999) call to heed the relationship between ethnicity and world affairs may have been an allusion to the other motif of the 1990s: ethnic conflicts and the rise of religious fundamentalism. The decade was marked by the ethnic tensions and violence in Yugoslavia, and the Hutu-Tutsi genocide in Rwanda (1994). By the time the Taliban seized Afghanistan in 1996, religion and its claimed cultural attributes had entered the international political fray. I would argue that these global events necessitated a response from multiculturalists and proponents of global education. In this climate, global education’s acclaimed “perspective consciousness” of other ways of life, risked collapsing into cultural relativism. In response to accusations of an identity politics that had “fallen into the trap of emphasizing categorical thinking and action” (Lynch, 1989, p. 11), scholars of both global and multicultural education sought to actively reconcile the two fields. The recent intersection of multicultural education and global education thus represents an attempt to bridge the local parameters of multiculturalism with global contingencies. As philosopher Martha Nussbaum succinctly put it, “we undercut the very case for multicultural respect within a nation by failing to make central to education a broader world respect” (1996, p. 14).

The 21st century opened with terrorism as the new “ism.” With the United States declaring a “global” war on terror, the rhetoric of the Bush administration divided the world along the “axis of evil.” Difference became fundamental to social, cultural,
political and economic relations. In a post 9/11 world, educators took up the challenges presented by what Samuel Huntington had referred to as a “clash of civilizations.” In response, by the late 1990s and early 21st century, the overarching shared discourse became human rights education (Diaz et al., 1999), models of cosmopolitan citizenship (Banks et al., 2005; Heater, 2002; Noddings, 2005; Nussbaum, 1996; Pike 2008; Schattle, 2008), and transformative social action (Baker, 1999; Gaudelli, 2003; Hill, 2007; Merryfield, 1996; Nieto 2002). Indeed, theory was never very far away from global events and praxis. Most significantly, political theorists, sociologists, philosophers, and educators found renewed relevance in the ancient tradition of cosmopolitanism, now also referred to as global citizenship. Schattle (2008) describes global citizenship as “an understanding of not only how human beings and their respective communities and habitats are interconnected but also how issues such as human rights, poverty, trade, and environmental sustainability intersect” (p. 44). According to Schattle, principled responsibility is the “ethical fulcrum” between this awareness and pro-active participation.

The primacy of cross-cultural awareness was also challenged by the cosmopolitan worldview. According to Vertovec and Cohen (2002), only the expanded concept of cosmopolitanism or world citizenship can encourage a disposition of tolerance, by offering a mode of managing multiple systems of cultural meaning in a space-time compressed globalized world. The authors claim that the key question of our age is:

Can or does exposure to other cultures – from buying bits of them to learning to partake in their beliefs and practices – lead to a fundamental change in attitudes? That would seem to be the raison d’être of most multicultural education, though
the jury is out on whether people exposed to it have become ‘more tolerant.’ (p. 14)

This conceptual challenge would be taken up by those interested in the education of the young. From a philosophical point of view, Nussbaum (1996) makes a case for a “cosmopolitan education.” Noddings (2005) emphasizes the importance of caring in the education of global citizens. The stalwarts of multicultural, global, and citizenship education, also repositioned their theoretical stand. In 2005, a panel of ten prominent scholars, under the leadership of James Banks, developed a 36-page blueprint for educators, *Democracy and Diversity: Principles and Concepts for Educating Citizens in a Global Age*. Addressing the relationship between unity and diversity in the community, nation, and the world, the authors maintain that the teaching of human rights should “underpin citizenship education courses and programs in multi-cultural nations” (Banks et al., 2005, p. 5).

The panel presented four principles and objectives that cover the four dimensions of education: the conceptual and cognitive (relationships, connections, interdependence), the political (democracy), and the moral (human rights). The fifth dimension of education is the student’s psychological development toward a more cosmopolitan global view. Quoting extensively from Martha Nussbaum’s famous essay, “Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism” (1996), the booklet concludes with a call for “critical patriotism” and the openness of a cosmopolitan view. Only a “citizen of the world,” it insists, would be better equipped to face today’s challenges. And, in an interconnected world, “Isolationism is no longer an option for nation-states.”
Ethically, cosmopolitans reach out to a universal global ethic that is largely founded on human rights. Politically, “cosmopolitan democracy” advocates a transnational structure of political action which can intervene in other nation-states when the cause is human rights, and actively supports international NGOs and social movements. In broad terms, cosmopolitanism is a notion which is shared by proponents of global education, multiculturalism, and citizenship education (Banks et al., 2005), as well educators in the other fields such as moral education and environmentalism (Nel Noddings, 2005), gender studies (Peggy McIntosh, 2005), and social studies (Jarchow, Merryfield, and Pickert, 1997).

Critics of cosmopolitanism argue that its meta-narrative excludes the importance of cultural mediation, a fundamental premise of multiculturalism (Walzer, 1996; Butler, 1996). From this point of view, cosmopolitanism reduces cultural diversity to a benign and depoliticized variance in society. In response to Nussbaum’s paper “Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism” (1996), Sisela Bok emphasizes the “how” rather than the “what”: “Educational programs that declare either a global or a more bounded perspective to be the only correct one are troubling in so far as they short-circuit reflection concerning such choice” (1996, p. 42). Similarly, Judith Butler (1996) exposes the limits of current notions of universality by pointing out that even the meaning of “universal” varies historically, and culturally (p. 47). Considering that cultural consensus is necessary for any enunciation of universality, Butler argues that any future articulation of the universal, must “effect cultural translations between those various cultural examples in order to see which versions of the universal are proposed, on what exclusions they are based, and how
the entry of the excluded into the domain of the universal requires a radical transformation in our thinking of universality” (p. 51). Politically, Nussbaum and other advocates of cosmopolitanism have been critiqued for privileging moral *theory* over the *praxis* of situated differences (Dallmayr, 2003).

Whether one agrees with a cosmopolitan worldview, or contends that it is a naive dismissal of contextual differences, the history and development of global education reveals that the field remains part of a national discourse on how to engage with changing global realities. Criticized for being un-patriotic (Cunningham, 1986), its theorists have sought to reconcile national priorities with its own principles of “perspective consciousness,” interdependence, and self-examination. Criticized for falling into cultural relativism, some global educators have sought the universalisms of cosmopolitanism. It is to be seen whether literature, in displaying social change, responds to national priorities or advocates cosmopolitanism.

**Conclusion**

Locating transcultural literature in the overlapping fields of multiculturalism and global education presents three important issues that educators need to keep in mind: cultural representation, social/global activism, and the tension between national and global priorities.

Transcultural literature echoes multicultural literature’s concern with cultural diversity and power relations in race, class and gender. Problems, however, arise when the two fields are conflated. While multicultural literature celebrates the cultural diversity of an American mosaic, the same cannot be said of transcultural literature about countries
like Pakistan or India. In this study’s analysis of cultural traditions and modernity, as portrayed in the works of contemporary realism on South Asia, I argue that transcultural literature judiciously celebrates the heritage of the arts, while unequivocally pointing to aspects of cultural practices that are reprehensible.

When multiculturalism’s concern with the underrepresented and race-gender-class differences is extended to the context of other nations, thorny political predicaments might arise. What does social justice and activism look like when transported to other shores? Critical multiculturalism offers many helpful insights, such as the resistance to stereotyping, an awareness of how certain ways of knowing constructs differences and the persistence of a “selective tradition” in what becomes canonical.

Both multicultural and global education share advocacy of social action and are precariously poised between the need to recognize diverse cultural identities, while aspiring towards a universal commonality. Global education is additionally encumbered with the task of balancing national allegiance and the vision of a cosmopolitan citizen who can manage cultural and political differences (Vertovec and Cohen, 2002). This national-cosmopolitan tension surfaces periodically in the analysis of the 18 selected books.

To conclude, transcultural literature is imbricated in the concepts, concerns, and controversies that inhere in multicultural and global education. The intersections and interstices between transcultural and multicultural literature prompt questions that recognize global complexities, without undermining the goals of multiculturalism. And
when viewed within the context of global education, transcultural literature can be held up to the goals of a global perspective.

Though this study is directed by the principles of a global perspective and the challenges presented by Third World development, human rights and war, these domains do not offer specific tools of analysis. The next chapter proposes a critical global perspective that combines global education with textual and visual analysis, thereby forging substantive connections between the text and the world. Linking the text and its images to global realities enables educators to better prepare a future generation that can understand and manage the cultural and political multiplicities of a globalized world.
CHAPTER 3: A LAYERED MULTIDIMENSIONAL METHOD

How might transcultural literature for children and adolescents promote global awareness, cross-cultural understanding, and cosmopolitanism, thereby encouraging readers to take thoughtful global action? This chapter maps out a mode of inquiry, referred to as a critical global perspective, which enables readers to challenge assumptions, identify excluded and embedded discourses, and expose contradictions in the narration of social and global transformation in transcultural literature. It combines the key attributes of a global perspective (Hanvey, 1976) with Michel Foucault’s understanding of critical discourse analysis, and the specific tools offered by literary criticism and visual semiotics.

The overarching framework of this study is based on Hanvey’s description of a global perspective as comprising of: perspective consciousness, knowledge of world conditions, cross-cultural awareness, knowledge of theories and concepts, and awareness of the problems of choice confronting individuals, nations, and the human species (Hanvey, 1976). Hanvey’s insistence on knowledge of world conditions and “theories and concepts that may increase intelligent consciousness of global change” (p.13), provides the second layer of the analysis, with specific reference to discussions on culture, development, human rights and international relations. Reading the selection of 18 books through the lenses of these theories, provide the necessary context for a global perspective. The questions raised by these theories serve to relate the text and/or image to the bigger picture of contemporary global dynamics.
Further layers are required in order to analyze the text’s/image’s discourse. Conceptually, a critical global perspective is guided by (1) Michel Foucault’s mode of critical analysis, and (2) Foucault’s notion of texts (including teaching guides) and images as a medium of discourse. The specific method for textual and visual analysis is based on (3) literary analysis of ideology and the social semiotics of visuals. This chapter explicates these three layers, each of which serves to further sharpen the focus of analysis. This layered and multidimensional approach constitutes what I refer to as a “critical global perspective.” Schematically, a critical global perspective in understanding literary narratives of societal, national and global transformations can be represented as three filtering layers that combine the 3 dimensions of world-texts-images (see Figure 2):

1. **A global perspective:**
   - perspective-consciousness
   - world conditions
   - cross-cultural awareness
   - theories & concepts
   - human choices

2. **Theories & concepts:**
   - Culture & Third World development
   - Human Rights
   - International Relations

3. **Discourse Analysis:**
   - Michel Foucault’s exposition of critical analysis
   - Foucault’s notion of discourse in text and image
   - Discourse in text & visual semiotics.

Figure 2: A critical global perspective

The flexibility of this approach enables the educator/reader/student to navigate the complexities of historical and contemporary background, authorial selectivity, textual and
visual devices, and pedagogical lessons that are embedded in transcultural literature on contemporary South Asia.

A Foucauldian Critical Analysis

The attribute of being a ‘critical’ theory and praxis has been used in different disciplines. In education, there is critical pedagogy, critical literacy, and critical multiculturalism. All of these schools of thought share a concern for power relations in social practices. As Yvonne Sheratt (2006) explains, “This process of confronting an item with the reality about itself in contrast with that which it aims to be is known as internal criticism. This internal criticism is the essence of critical theory” (pp. 200-201). In this respect, a critical analysis of transcultural literature aims at juxtaposing these narratives with its contribution to cross-cultural understanding, global awareness, and peace education, as recognized by the conferring of awards and scholarly commentary (Glasgow and Rice, 2007).

Transcultural literature is often viewed through the lens of critical multicultural analysis. According to Botelho and Rudman (2009), a critical multicultural analysis of literature acknowledges that “all literature is a historical and cultural product and reveals how the power relations of race, class, and gender work together in text and image, and by extension, in society” (p.1). My concern is not the amply researched representation of race-class-gender power relations. Instead, I interject this framework with the crucial notion of change, as indicated by Norman Fairclough’s (1995) comment that “no proper understanding of contemporary discursive practices is possible that does not attend to the matrix of change” (p.19). Viewing these 18 books through the matrix of change means
identifying how power relations are modified in these literary works, thereby propelling an image of the possibility for social change. For instance, how do oppressive gender relationships change? How is child labor resisted? Does power continue to circulate through a certain matrix of change? In short, what or who has the power to change the status quo? To this end, I deploy a Foucauldian approach to critical analysis.

In an article entitled “Foucault,” ostensibly by Maurice Florence, but almost entirely written by Michel Foucault himself, the author(s) describes his “project” as a “Critical History of Thought.” Florence/Foucault describe a critical method as “an analysis of the conditions under which certain relations of subject to object are formed or modified, insofar as those relations constitute a possible knowledge [savoir]” (as cited in Faubion and Rabinow, 1998, p. 459). In the same paper, the author(s) adds that a critical approach must investigate the conditions of possibility that shape these “historical constructs.” This principle has been applied in schools of literary criticism influenced by Foucault’s writings. Three schools are of major importance: New Historicism in the United States, Cultural Materialism in the United Kingdom, and Diskursanalyse in Germany (During, 1992). All three schools share a concern for the “social forces and agents and processes” that constitute the literary text in its “broader discursive framework” (Hodge, 1990, pp. 203-205). In keeping with this understanding of a critical analysis, this study identifies the conditions which shape a certain relationship between the author, the reader and the viewed South Asian. But, what are these “conditions”? Historical analytics (a term used to describe Foucault’s method), an overview of the framework of multicultural and global education, and theories on culture, development,
human rights and international relations provide insights to how the text/s relates to the conditional “broader discursive framework”.

Each chapter in this study begins with an overview of the theories the text converses with. The premise is that all theories are discourses that implicitly or explicitly constitute worldviews and social practice. To cite an example, economic and political theories have justified actions and social practices, in as much as they have grown out of empirical conditions. By examining the text in relation to current contesting models of Third World development, international relations, or the debate surrounding the universalism of human rights, these theories help identify what discourses are included and/or excluded. Most importantly, these theories are used to arrive at a roadmap of questions that are applied to these 18 texts, but which can also be used to examine any transcultural book that deals with similar issues (see chapter 1, pp. 21-22).

Foucault’s next principle is that “everything in our knowledge which is suggested to us as being universally valid must be tested and analyzed” (1998, p. 461). This entails problematizing the universalism of human rights and notions of modernity, by seeking excluded perspectives.

Third, according to Foucault, a critical analysis addresses practices in institutions, and disciplines, so that one might better understand power relations (1998, pp. 462-463). In accordance with this principle, teaching guides and the commentary of literary critics will be examined.

Apart from providing a general template for this study’s method, Foucault’s mode of critical analysis also satisfies three criteria for a ‘global perspective’: examination of
assumptions and perspective-consciousness, awareness of world conditions, and knowledge of global dynamics and theories.

**Text, Teaching Guides, and Images as Discourse**

The second lens draws from Foucault’s notion of discourse, as espoused in *The Discourse on Language* (1971), *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972), and *Discipline and Punish* (1979). Discourse is a certain “way of speaking” and doing (Foucault, 1972, p.193; p. 209) that belongs to a “single system of formation [of knowledge]” (Foucault, 1972, p.107). Michel Foucault’s exposition of discourse leads to an understanding of the text, teaching guide, and image as a historically and socially determined discursive practice that implies certain conditions of possibility and exclusions. For the purpose of this study, discourse is understood as:

> a form of social action that plays a part in producing the social world – including knowledge, identities and social relations – and thereby in maintaining specific social patterns. (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002, p.5)

Literature as discourse has been studied by numerous scholars (e.g. Eagleton, 1983; Fowler, 1977, 1981; Hodge, 1990; Said, 1979; Stephens, 1992; van Dijk, 1985). I extend this notion to include teaching guides. As a discourse, or a certain way of relating to the world, these guides often constitute explicit social meaning-making processes that are enmeshed in extra-literary practices (such as global education and activism). As a discourse, they are involved in the generation of knowledge. And literature gains further legitimacy as a source of knowledge and truth due to its proximity to institutions invested with power (such as awards). This confluence between the text, knowledge, power, and social practices, finds it theoretical bearings in the Foucaldian notion of discourse.
The term ‘discourse’ has been significantly influenced by the work of Michel Foucault (1926-1984). His major contribution was to shift the attention from a linguistic study of language, to that of discourse as a certain regulated and regular way of speaking, writing, and representing. The term discursive formation is often used to reflect this hegemony of discourse. Foucault describes a discursive formation as:

Whenever one can describe, between a number of statements, such a system of dispersion, whenever, between objects, types of statement, concepts, or thematic choices, one can define a regularity (an order, correlations, positions, and functionings, transformations), we will say, for the sake of convenience, that we are dealing with a discursive formation. . . . (1972, p. 38).

Locating a corpus of books in a discourse, begs the question, what is this discursive formation? It bears repetition that in this study, the discursive formation comprises of contemporary history, the domain of multicultural and global education, and competing theories on culture, development, human rights, and international relations. Discourse analysis looks for conditions and relationships within this formation.

The concept of discourse is commonly operationalized in the study of language and visuals. For instance, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) seeks to understand “the relationship between language form and function, the history of the practices that construct present-day practices, and how social roles are acquired and transformed” (Rogers, 2004, pp. 1-2). In this study, the analysis of Patricia McCormick’s Sold (2006) approaches a CDA approach. Visuals also carry discourse. In fact, Foucault’s The Order of Things (1970) opens with the description and analysis of the gaze and mirror in Velázquez’s painting “Las Meninas.” Cultural Studies and visual semiotics have
extended the notion of discourse to include visual representations, especially that of
advertisements and the media (Hall, 2000).

Typically, Foucault’s work is divided into two periods: (1) the early
“archaeological” phase in which he studies the rules of exclusion that determine which
statements are considered true (hence knowledge) in a given historical period, and (2) a
later “genealogical” period when he developed a theory about the relationship between
power/knowledge. Foucault’s “archaeological” methodology is associated with his
theorizing of discourse. It is formalized in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972) and
*The Discourse on Language* (1982). These works, along with *The Birth of the Clinic*
(1963) and *The Order of Things* (1970), belong to his ‘archaeological’ method of
historical analytics. The idea of an “archaeology” of thought is linked to the literary idea
that language is not merely an expression of thought, but is a source of thought. As a
method, it is interested in the archaeological unearthing of the conceptual environment, or
“conditions of possibility,” that determine and limit the way one thinks in a given period.
Foucault adds that if a discourse’s “conditions of existence” are probed, and the
connections with other discourses are dismantled, then the discourse’s function and
transformation can concern political practice (Foucault, 1972, p. 245). Archaeology thus
has an emancipatory political function, since it throws into question relations of power
(O’Farrell, 2005, p.64).

Certain rules and relationships help shape the regularity of a “discursive
formation” and its practice. These rules relate to how discourse is appropriated, limited,
215-237), a lecture delivered at the Collège de France in 1970, Foucault categorizes these rules of exclusion into three groups, pertaining to whether they function externally, internally, and under what conditions. In this sense, literature and teaching guides can explicitly or implicitly activate modes of exclusion. Foucault’s analysis of the control of discourse leads one to ask: *What discourses are included and excluded in the text (and/or image)?* Contesting perspectives on culture, development, modernity, international relations, and human rights, provide a theoretical basis for the identification of excluded discourses.

In literature, the author is certainly a filter. The author bounds the limits of a discourse, through implicit narrative strategies that exclude certain outlying discourses (Foucault, 1982, p. 222). This prompts the question: *How do language-use and narrative structure limit discourse?*

One of Foucault’s key preoccupations is how individuals came to be categorized, objectified, and studied. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972), Foucault suggests that it is important to map out how a certain category of individuals has become the “objects of discourse.” This would mean analyzing the “grids of specification,” or how certain people are “divided, contrasted, related” as objects of discourse (p. 42). This solicits the question: *What or who is being contrasted textually and/or visually?*

The ability of discourse to control and regulate, harbors its relationship to knowledge and power. Foucault’s exposition of the knowledge/power relationship is associated with his second genealogical period, as in *Discipline and Punish* (1979), *History of Sexuality* (1978) and essays in *Power/Knowledge* (a collection of essays)
published between 1972 and 1977). Foucault claims that “knowledge is defined by the possibilities of use and appropriation offered by discourse” (Foucault, 1978, p.182).

Thus, what is considered to be legitimate knowledge at any given time and place, shapes and is shaped by discourse. For instance, the conferring of awards validates a certain type of knowledge. It is this institutionalized legitimacy that connects knowledge to power.

In *Discipline and Punish* (1979), Foucault describes genealogy as a “history of the present” (pp. 30-31), with the intent of evaluating the present. A study of the relationship between contemporary transcultural literature and socio-political forces in the broader discursive field is motivated by the need to scrutinize the present. This study’s analysis of post 1989 children’s and young adult fiction on South Asia is guided by the urgency to evaluate how literature speaks about North America’s current political engagement in Afghanistan, the continued moral response to human rights issues in Pakistan, Nepal and India, and the socio-economic challenges in Bangladesh.

*Discipline and Punish* (1979) also deals with the role of power in the formation of subjects, as exercised in schools, in the army, prisons, and in factories. According to Foucault, power constitutes discourse, knowledge, bodies and individual subjectivities. Power produces the social, and how we talk about our social world. Subjects too, are constituted by social discourse. However, for Foucault, both domination and empowerment are central elements in the exercise of power. Power thus accounts for how human beings are made subject to someone else (subjection), and/or into a “subject” who is “tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge” (Foucault, 2000, p. 331).

It is important to stress that a Foucauldian notion of power is not unidirectional (as in a top
to bottom hierarchy), nor is it a Marxist view that tends to reduce the relation between knowledge and power to class and economics. For Foucault, power circulates ubiquitously in a network. As he says in a *History of Sexuality, I: An Introduction*, “Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere” (1978, p. 93). In this sense, any change in power relations (even emancipatory) is also implicated in the machinery of power.

From a Foucauldian lens, transcultural books, in which the protagonist resists cultural or socio-economic repression, can be read as coming-of-age “problem novels” where self-awareness entails a redefinition of social power relations. Instead, picture books that are written for younger audiences satisfy a developmental need for reassurance, rather than posing the gravity of a “problem,” or a destabilizing shift in power relations (Trites, 2000). Foucault’s articulation of the relationship between self-awareness and power shifts, and his understanding that “subjects” are constituted by discourse, prompts the question: *How do picture books and novels differ in the resolution of socio-cultural, economic and political problems, especially with respect to power relations?*

Change necessitates a struggle between different kinds of discourses. In *The History of Sexuality: Vol. 1*, (1978), Foucault observes that there are “a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies” (1976, p. 100). Hence, a Foucauldian notion of discourse(s) helps understand how these texts offer readers a way to recognize the different discourses that come into play in socio-cultural dynamics. This study explores the extent to which literature that represents South Asia reflects a
multiplicity of discourses regarding how change and social transformation comes about.

Hence the question: *How can the book/s be read in a way that surfaces multiple discourses regarding social transformation?*

Finally, the overarching notion of discourse permits adopting an interdisciplinary mode of inquiry. As Jørgensen and Phillips (2002) put it:

> Such multiperspectival work is not only permissible but positively valued in most forms of discourse analysis. The view is that different perspectives provide different forms of knowledge about a phenomenon so that, together, they produce a broader understanding. (p 4)

Viewing a particular corpus of books (text and visual) as produced in and by the macro-discourses of our time (e.g. human rights), allows me to cross disciplines, adopt the lenses of the field of global education, and critically examine the discourse on social transformation in the Third World. This “multiperspectival” dimension lends a global perspective to what would otherwise be limited to a close textual and visual analysis.

To sum up, Michel Foucault’s understanding of critical analysis and his notion of discourse offer an interdisciplinary method, characterized by unraveling the historical, societal, political, theoretical and institutional conditions in which texts and practices are contextualized. It also allows for the identification and analysis of exclusions, binaries, hierarchies, and the dynamics of power relations in processes of change. His work, however, does not offer specific tools of analysis to examine texts and visuals. For this, I turn to scholars who have formulated a systematic mode of analysis.
I ideological Discourses in Texts and Visuals

The third lens is provided by scholars who are concerned with the ideological discourses in children’s and young adult literature (Botelho & Rudman, 2009; Hollindale, 1992; Hunt, 1999; Nodelman, 1992; Stephens, 1992; Trites, 2000). Discourse, as a regulatory practice of speaking, writing and representing, produces ideology. While the social fabric is per force dependent on the circulation of discourse and ideologies, a critical approach is alert to power struggles. Literary critic Terry Eagleton’s description of ideology is relevant to this study. For Eagleton,

... the concept of ideology aims to disclose something of the relationship between an utterance and its material conditions of possibility, when those conditions are viewed in the light of certain power-struggles central to the reproduction (or also, for some theories, contestation) of a whole form of social life. (1991, p. 223)

This study employs the tools of analysis provided by scholars who acknowledge the ideological underpinnings of literature written for children and young adults, both in terms of text and visuals (Hollindale, 1992; Hunt, 1999; Moynihan, 1988; Nodelman, 1988, 1992; Sarland, 1999; Stephens, 1992; Sutherland, 1985; Trites, 2000; Zipes, 1979). In particular, the works of these scholars enable me to answer two of the above mentioned questions: How do language-use and narrative structure limit discourse?

What or who is being contrasted textually and/or visually?

There is much overlap between the above mentioned scholars, Foucault’s mode of critical analysis, and the principles of a ‘global perspective.’ Not unlike Foucault’s “conditions of possibility,” and the awareness of “global systems” and conditions, Peter Hollindale (1992), in his benchmark paper, “Ideology,” urges readers to map the writer’s
location in “the huge commonalities of an age and the captivity of mind we undergo by living in our time and place and no other” (p. 32). Similar to Foucault’s principles of exclusion, and global education’s “perspective-consciousness,” Perry Nodelman (1992), also calls for an awareness of a “text’s absences, the ideas or assumptions it takes for granted and therefore does not actually exert” (p. 93). Nodelman suggests questioning the text’s political and social assumptions, as a way of reading against the text. He is quick to add that:

. . . the reader need not agree with the contrapuntal viewpoint, but we can use this strategy as a device to distance ourselves from our own assumptions. For example, by asking ourselves why certain plots seem so convincing, we can better understand ourselves. (p. 94)

The question, “why certain plots are convincing,” points to literary criticism’s ability to study how narrative devices such as point-of-view, narrative voice, conclusions, and characterization persuade the reader. This study largely draws from John Stephens’ (1992) book Language and Ideology in Children’s Literature. Stephens reasons that if a child’s socialization is about learning to position one’s individual selfhood (referred to as ‘subjectivity’) in various discourses, then language provides an important way to express and mold subjectivity. According to Stephens, literature, and particularly children’s literature is constructed with the intent to shape or influence reader responses and hence, the reader’s attitudes (p. 48). The task is to dismantle this complicity between reader roles (such as identification), narrative operations, the overt or latent ideology ‘inscribed’ in texts or visuals, and a macro-discourse of a priori assumptions. He suggests that this relationship can be disassembled through the analysis of narrative point of view (the
perceiving agent or ‘focalizer’), the degree of identification with the focalizer (passive or interrogative), the narrative voice (first or third person), visuals, endings, and epilogues.

Roberta Seelinger Trites (2000) also maintains that ideology is a function of the relationship between the narrator and the implied reader, describing it as “the crucible in which ideology is smelted.” She notes that, “With the assumptions that any text makes about what its reader knows [the gap], every text positions the implied reader in multiple subject positions” (p. 73). What is filled into the implicit “gap” is of salient interest in literature that represents unfamiliar societies, cultures and nations. Since the reader is displaced, often marooned in an alien scenario, the power dynamics between the reader and author tilts toward the latter, opening up a foundry for Trites’ smelting of ideologies. The readers must necessarily fill the gap with intratextual inferences, and draw from a schema of experience, knowledge, and values often shared with the author (esp. in transcultural literature in which the author and implied audience are both outsiders). On the other hand, active critical readers question the position of the implied reader, identify what “gaps” are being filled (Trites, 2000; Belsey, 1980, Stephens, 1992), challenge their own and the author’s assumptions, and ask what is excluded and why. At the level of macro-discourse, critical reading would also take heed of Hollindale’s (1998) advice to pay heed to the “underlying climate of belief” in an age. A critically conscious reader would recognize, as Foucault says, that a novel is “a population of events in the space of discourse in general” (Foucault, 1972, p.27).

Apart from textual analysis, the discourse of visuals is examined. The method of analysis draws from methods explicated by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996), Nikolajeva
and Scott (2001), Nodelman (1988), and Stephens (1992). The analysis of images in picture books, media, and film, has brought into play different disciplines and methodologies. While art historians developed a more iconographical method of visual analysis that focuses on the image, cultural studies and social semiotic visual analysis deals with the relationship between the image and the larger social context. These approaches are concerned with the syntactic relationship between people, places, and things in images and how the maker/s of images re-construct reality for the viewer, thereby influencing social interaction in the world (Leeuwen and Jewitt, pp. 2-10).

Images on the jacket of books have an important function. When analyzing the book covers, I keep in mind that the jacket of a book ‘advertises’ its content in an aesthetically unique image that captures the consumer’s attention, while conveying an aspect of the book, such as the theme, setting, or protagonist. In order to communicate and be an effective marketing device, book covers have to echo the conventional codes of representation and resonate with a discourse shared by the viewers. Hence, the underlying assumption is that through a visual analysis, viewers can de-code what representations and relationships are being marketed and offered for consumption. A proviso is in order; authorial intention may not necessarily coincide with that of the illustrator. In North American publishing practices, the illustrator might not even consult the writer (Nodelman, 2003, p. 196). The fact that jacket designers and illustrators often have little or no contact with the author supports the notion of a common discourse that cuts across the textual, visual, and institutional.
Visual images are an integral part of the narrative in picture books. In the case of transcultural picture books, images provide an important source of information which supports, extends, or may even contradict the text (Nikolajeva and Scott, 2001, pp. 225-226). Whatever the text and image relationship might be, pictures inform the reader as to how to interpret the narrative content.

Even when the author is not the illustrator, the relationship between text and image is symbiotic. This interaction between text and image in picture books has been described as synergetic, an interanimation, and an interweaving of meaning-making (Lewis, 2001). Thus, despite the different sites of production, from the point of view of the reader, the text and image are taken as a composite, intertextual whole. Hence, in this study, I refer to the relationship between text and image in picture books, as text-image. This notion is based on Kress and van Leeuwen’s definition of a text, “as that phenomenon which is the result of the articulation in one or more semiotic modes of a discourse, or . . . a number of discourses” (2001, p. 40). The intertextuality between text and image, and their location in extra-literary discourses, leads one to ask: How do images support, extend, or problematize the narrative’s discourses?

In order to explore this question, it is necessary to examine the elements of visual design. The purpose of the analysis is to relate the image to the text and discourses on culture, Third World development, human rights, and war. Specifically, I apply the techniques of visual analysis offered in Perry Nodelman’s (1988) Words about Picture: the Narrative Art of Children’s Picture Books, John Stephen’s Language and Ideology in

All these authors see visual representation as a socially situated meaning-making process. Communication is the result of a common understanding of visually represented discourses that “cannot be understood without a sense of the historical/social contingencies of the arrangements and configuration of practices and modes” (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 43). Or as Stephens (1992) reminds us, “In order to make sense to its viewers, a picture book will be grounded in some version of consensus reality and use conventional codes of representation” (p. 158). Kress, van Leeuwen, Nodelman and Stephens all use the term “ideology” to describe the social effect of these multimodal (text-image) ensembles of discourse. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (1996), these multimodal configurations of discourse are guided by the “interest of social groups who interact within the structures of power that define social life” (p. 159). This is not to say that visuals cannot be a counter-discourse. But, any surplus already operates within a particular discourse.

By way of visual analysis, Nodelman (1988) offers a useful blueprint for the correspondence between narrative text and imagery. According to him, style, media, composition, color, and details can be “read’ for their narrative content. The illustrator’s choice of style and media communicates a specific interpretation of the story (p. 79). For example, the use of photographs encourages credibility, just as contemporary realism would shy away from a folkloric style. Composition comprises of space relationships, vertical and horizontal angles, and perspective. All these elements of design are involved
in the interaction between the viewer and the image. Nodelman observes that the space relationship between objects can affect the way we understand them (p.130). Perspective, like narrative focalizers, tends to focus our attention, emphasizing a particular point of view. As Stephens (1992) points out, perspective in composition, quite literally means “where the viewer is positioned,” making it a prop for narrative point-of-view and focalization (p. 162). Composition is also linked to the relationship between the readers and that which is represented. Typically, long-shots imply objectivity, middle-distance shots emphasize the relationship between characters, and close-ups generate involvement with the characters (p. 151).

Kress and van Leeuwen refer to their approach as “social semiotics” (from the Greek semeion, meaning sign). They provide the framework and tools of analysis to evaluate the connection between visual representation and social practice. For the authors, the elements of design are signs that combine to produce meaning and discourse. They argue that since the production of meaning through images, is “entirely within the realm of ideology” (p.12), the analysis of visual communication should be a part of critical analysis. Particularly relevant for this study is Kress and van Leeuwen’s notion of provenance. Provenance refers to signs imported from one context to another in order to signify a complex of ideas and values, which are associated with that other domain, by those who do the importing. For example, in many of the 18 book covers, the image of a woman with a covered head is an example of provenance, and a “sign” of the ideological discourses through which one culture views and interprets another.
It is this interweaving of global context with visual semiotics and a discourse analysis of the text and teaching guides, that affords the opportunity to look at these books from the multiple perspectives of contemporary events, global education, literary criticism, and the institutionalization of learning practices (as in publishers’ guides).

**Conclusion**

To recapitulate, there are three layers that comprise reading with a critical global perspective. The first layer is the template of what constitutes a global perspective, as described by Hanvey (1976). The second layer addresses what discourses “condition” the text. The investigation of this discursive formation is provided by questions raised from an understanding of differing theories on culture, development, human rights, and international relations. While these questions provide entry points into how the text connects to the world and vice versa, they do not give the reader the specific tools of discourse analysis. This toolkit is provided by a third layer of questions which emerged from the method explicated in this chapter. These are:

1. What discourses are included and excluded in the text (and, or image)?
2. How can the book/s be read in a way that surfaces multiple discourses of social transformation?
3. How do language-use and narrative structure limit discourse?
4. What or who is being contrasted textually and/or visually?
5. How do images support, extend, or problematize the narrative’s discourses?
6. How do picture books and novels differ in the resolution of socio-cultural, economic and political problems, especially with respect to power relations?

When combined with relevant social theories, these questions construct a “critical global perspective” on how socio-cultural and global change is conveyed in texts, images and teaching guides.

The next chapter begins with an analysis of the representation of culture, and the relationship between cultural traditions, development, and modernity. It is a recurring issue, which is at the heart of any discussion on developing countries.
CHAPTER 4: NARRATING DEVELOPMENT AND MODERNITY

When contemporary realism is set in developing countries, unique narrative possibilities arise. In this chapter, I propose going beyond the common assumption that transcultural literature on South Asia celebrates cross-cultural understanding. Instead, I argue that these books are shaped by a global discourse on the development and modernization of these cultures and countries. Indeed, development theories and notions of modernity bridge the conceptual gap between celebrating cultural diversity, and multicultural education’s concern with race, class, and gender inequities. Development theories refer to a body of work that is concerned with how positive social changes are achieved. According to Peet and Hartwick (1999), “Development is a founding belief of the modern world. In development, all the modern advances in science, technology, democracy, values, ethics, and social organization fuse into the single humanitarian project of producing a far better world” (p.1). Deploying the notion of transcultural literature as a discourse on development, leads to a more complex understanding of how the narrative of children’s and young adult’s literature is intrinsically linked to the project of a better future.

An overview of the amorphous idea of culture, postcolonial critique of cultural representations, and the differing theories of development yields a set of five questions. Combined with the questions that emerged from a critical discourse analysis of texts and visuals, this toolkit enables educators and readers to consider how literature converses with important global discussions on the modernization of developing societies. Applying these questions to a selection of five books, which include young adult novels and a chapter
book, it becomes apparent that the authors are proffering different social, economic, and political suggestions for the modernization of South Asian societies. In Gloria Whelan’s *Homeless Bird* (2000), the failings of female disempowerment in Hindu culture are mitigated by a model of philanthropic benevolence that fosters a girl’s free-market entrepreneurship. In Suzanne Fisher Staples’ Pakistan-based trilogy (*Shabanu*, 1989; *Haveli*, 1993; *The House of Djinn*, 2008), cultural and political modernization is spearheaded by an American-educated upper middle class. Mitali Perkins’ *Rickshaw Girl* (2008), on the other hand, favors grassroots organizations that empower the subaltern woman. Viewed against the backdrop of modernity’s legacy from the Enlightenment, these books point to social and cultural development as a process of discontinuity with past traditions, a critique of old forms of being and social relationships, and the unalienable right to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” Although these narratives of modernity, interrogate the relationship between the individual and society through the lens of fostering capability and freedom of choice, they also pose a challenge to how readers view the socio-economic and political contexts of South Asian societies.

To some extent this chapter re-examines Meena Khorana’s 1989 comment on children’s literature on India: “The constant opposition between India as a land of steadfast beliefs and India as a land of progress gives western children the limited message that India has to get past its traditions in order to achieve technological advancement” (p. 201). The title of her paper was, “Tradition and Modernity: A Rediscovery of India.” It was a review of five children’s books (fictive and informational) that were published in 1989. Twenty years hence, in a radically changed globalized world, it is opportune to ask if this
opposition between tradition and modernity has persisted or changed in post-1989 books on South Asia.

**Culture and the ‘Selective Tradition’ in Representations**

The centrality of culture as a portal for understanding the world is noted in the very terminology “multicultural” or “transcultural.” It is this focus that led to the insider/outsider and cultural authenticity debates surrounding multicultural literature. Cross-cultural awareness is also one of the five criteria for a ‘global perspective.’ But what is culture? Since it encompasses a way of life, belief, art, values, practices, and customs, should one talk of culture in cohesive, monolithic, and static terms? Or, is there always a hybrid plurality of dynamic cultures in any given society? Has this all-encompassing meaning of culture made it far too unwieldy a concept to be of any analytical use?

Raymond Williams famously referred to culture as one of the most complicated words in the English language (1983). Indeed, the very notion of ‘culture’ is riddled with ambiguities. Today, the meaning of a “culture” has evolved from the earlier connotations of being cultured and civilized, to anthropologist Clifford Geertz’s (1973) more comprehensive definition of “shared patterns that set the tone, character, and quality of people’s lives” (p. 118). Furthermore, rather than an essentialist view of culture as a transmission of unchanged traditions, cultures are understood as simultaneously plural and dynamic meaning-making processes. It is an amorphous identity in which ethnicity, religion, gender, class, social values, nation, religion, and the inherent potential for change is constantly brewing. Individuals can construct their own cultural identity, as will be noted in *Under the Persimmon Tree*, which features an American who has converted to Islam.
Cultures also change because of larger forces. In *Haveli* and *The House of Djinn*, the influence of American values can be read as an indication of the ‘modern’ globalization of culture, rather than as evidence of neo-colonialism. This dynamic view of culture poses the question: *Through what processes is cultural change narrated in these books?*

**Through what processes is cultural change narrated in these books?**

Referring to the word “culture,” Eagleton (2000), affirms that “Within this single term, questions of freedom and determinism, agency and endurance, change and identity, the given and the created, come dimly into focus” (p. 2). Protagonists in young adult literature often construct their identity by redefining social, economic or cultural relationships. In the case of a cultural milieu rooted in resilient traditions, self-identity may not always be open to hybridity and change. In all the novels under scrutiny, whenever there is a female protagonist, culturally defined gender roles and relationships clash with the adolescent’s coming-of-age self-actualization. Individual growth, and by extrapolation social progress, is seen as hindered by entrenched cultural traditions. Culture, as a problem, is based on the premise that since culture directs and interprets “what we do to the world and what the world does to us” (Eagleton, 2000, p. 2), re-defining social relationships (such as gender, class, or race) would necessitate a change in overall cultural values.

Others would contend that culture is not the be all and end all it is made out to be. Rather, it is the socio-economic context that shapes culture. Hence, gender relationships will change if women have access to education and jobs. The woman or girl’s entry into the workforce will be seen in *Homeless Bird* and *Rickshaw Girl*. But how should this process happen? Through state programs, foreign aid, philanthropy, grassroots organizations, or is
the individual responsible? The section on development theory and praxis illustrates how children’s literature on South Asia has broached this problem in the past.

There is also a semiotic aspect to culture that is embodied in symbols that signify identity and social relationships. For instance, in this chapter, I demonstrate how the synecdoche of veiled clothing has come to symbolize stifling cultural traditions. The persistent image of the South Asian women cloaked in head covers is part of a “selective tradition” in cultural representations.

Is there evidence of a shift in a “selective tradition” in cultural representations?

Despite the dynamic and heterogeneous nature of cultural processes in society, certain cultural values and practices are taken as representative of the whole of social life, where social refers explicitly to social processes and relationships. Raymond Williams calls this a “selective tradition:”

What we have to see is not just “a tradition” but a selective tradition: an intentionally selected version of a shaping past and preshaped present, which is then powerfully operative in the process of social and cultural definition and identification. (1977, p. 115)

Raymond Williams’ notion of a “selective tradition” explicates that the cultural heritage which is passed down as tradition is a selective and evaluative interpretation of the past. But, it also points to a selective tradition in the way under-developed or developing societies are represented and understood. For instance, South Asian cultures may be selectively filtered through a discourse on development in which cultural tradition is pitted against modernity. Fortunately, literary analysis can be a reflective mirror that disrupts the
selectivity of how we look at, know, and interact with others. It can help “relate the interpretation to the contemporary values on which it rests” and “confront us with the real nature of the choices we are making” (Williams, 2001, p. 69).

Literature is also known to presage discontinuities in the dominant discourse of a selective tradition. Williams states that “In the analysis of contemporary culture, the existing state of the selective tradition is of vital importance, for it is often true that some change in this tradition – establishing new lines with the past, breaking or re-drawing existing lines – is a radical kind of contemporary change” (2001, p. 69). I propose that by relating this corpus of books to development theories, readers can confront the ideological discourses embedded in these books, and differentiate between a persistent selective tradition in narrating South Asian society and potential shifts in this legacy. In other words, is there evidence of a shift in a selective tradition in cultural representations?

**Developing the Third World**

I refer to the ‘discourse on development,’ as the dominant representations and practices that shape relationships between the developed West and the under-developed or developing Third World. I use the term ‘development’ in a broad sense that goes beyond economic growth indicators, and includes rates of literacy, child mortality, gender equality, and social processes that engender the ‘capabilities’ (to borrow a term from Amartya Sen) of all children and adults.

Development education (also referred to as education for development) is a major dimension of global education (Diaz et al., 1999; Hicks, 2003; Sylvester, 2007). In his review of thirty years of global education, David Hicks (2003) explains that development
education “Originated with the work of NGOs that were concerned about issues of development and north–south relationships. Focus of concern has widened to embrace other global issues, but development remains the core concept” (p. 274). There are two aspects to education for development. The first relates to the several organizations that produce teaching materials which encourage awareness about developing or underdeveloped countries among young people in industrialized countries (e.g. Heifer, Peace Corps, and Oxfam). These teaching materials often include ways in which students can actively participate in Third World development. The second relates to the direct initiatives in developing countries that help combat problems such as poverty, ill health, and illiteracy (Fountain, 1995, p.13). Global education and transcultural literature on contemporary South Asia is concerned with the former. Irrespective of the different locations of development education, they share a common concern for developing Third World countries, as championed in the policies advocated by development theorists.

Perspectives on development education vary depending on whether the viewpoint is that of the ‘developer’ – committed to assuaging poverty and bringing about the happiness of others – or the ‘developed’ who are forced to modify their social relations (Rist, 1997, p.2). Fujikame observes that for the United States “the term development education was not education about but for the reconstruction of developing countries, which were to be modernized on western industrialized models” (Fujikame, 2003, p 136). Notwithstanding the laudatory aim of poverty alleviation, health and education, the post war paradigm of modernization was virulently critiqued as a “form of neocolonialism” (Kothari, 2002, p. 38), constructed in the West and implemented by Western policy makers who controlled
the conditions for development aid. Acknowledging this controversy, when reading transcultural literature, readers need to ask: *Are Western models of modernization being privileged?*

**Does development entail an opposition between tradition and modernity?**

Depending on one’s ideological stance, underdevelopment is seen as produced by colonialism and contemporary forces of globalization (dependency theory), or fostered by internal factors such as cultural tradition and/or governance. Novels on contemporary South Asia reflect theories that are more concerned with the latter perspective.

Though the practice of developing less fortunate peoples and nations has a long history, not least in the civilizing mission of church and colonialism, the contemporary concept of underdevelopment can be traced to President Truman’s January 1949 Inaugural Address (Rist, 1997). Known as the Four Point speech, the first three points referred to the Marshall Plan, the United Nations, and NATO. Point Four inaugurated the ‘development age.’ Challenging both colonialism and communism, it stated:

> Fourth, we must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas. (as cited in Rist, 1997, p. 71)

Rist suggests that Truman put forward a new way of conceiving international relations, that replaced the colonizer/colonized opposition with a developed/underdeveloped dichotomy (1997, pp. 72-73). More generous observers would insist that Truman heralded the idea of global interdependence and responsibilities.
Responding to Truman’s call, the United Nations built its agenda for action around two closely related issues: development and human rights.

The 1960s was the United Nations First Developmental Decade. Furthering the call to develop Third World countries, international organizations such as UNDP (UN Development Program) and the World Bank were set up. Developed nations, characterized by high rates of literacy, and well-developed health-care, educational, and social systems, typically extended the post-war Marshall Plan to underdeveloped, post-colonial host countries. Most of these programs had a top-down model, beginning with inter-governmental plans drawn up by experts, who believed that development meant both modernizing traditional societies and keeping communism at bay. Instituting a tension between tradition and modernity, proponents attributed underdevelopment to “backward” traditional values and behaviors. W.W. Rostow’s The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto (1960) dominated development theories of the 1960s. Rostow laid out degrees of development, in which “traditional society” is equivalent to a degree zero. Market driven economic progress was seen as a trigger that disintegrates traditional societies, until a “modern alternative is constructed out of the old culture” (as cited in Rist, p. 96). Economic standards, such as the growth of gross national product, a rise in personal incomes, industrialization, technological advances, and social modernization were seen as indices of development (Sen, 1999). Development, as a path towards modernity, necessitated moving away from tradition. This standpoint raises the question: Does development entail an opposition between tradition and modernity?
Narrating social change: towards grassroots movements and gender issues.

Early transcultural literature on ‘developing’ South Asia closely reflected this equivalence of tradition with underdevelopment, and industrialization as a prerequisite for development. Jean Bothwell was a Methodist missionary who spent many years in pre- and post-independence India. Though she wrote several fictive and informational books on the region, I cite four of her books as a register of how the narrative of ‘development’ shifted from the work of Christian missions, to that of United States’ foreign aid programs. In Jean Bothwell’s *The Empty Tower* (1948), a Christian charity school provides food, education, and values to Indian students. In Bothwell’s Pakistan based *Ring of Fate* (1957), the focus is on the conflict between Western schooling and the traditional Muslim upbringing of girls. Health education was another major concern. In *White Fawn of Phalera* (1963), a nurse in a mission combats age-old superstitions. In *Chand of India* (1954), selfless missionaries combat the problems of village life – disease, starvation, drought, and illiteracy. Khorana (1991) observes that “The novel also displays a paternalistic attitude toward the New India whose ancient traditions are no longer considered valid. Over and over again . . . India is depicted as dependent on the United States for technological assistance and machinery for the building of the massive Bhakra-Nangal Dam” (p.141).

Keeping in mind this archive, I remain alert to the persistence of a narrative in which the subaltern Third Worlde is ‘modernized’ at the behest of Church and/or America.

In 1961, the United States created USAID (US Agency for International Aid) to actively support assistance programs in developing countries. Individuals were mobilized in Kennedy’s Peace Corps programs. Several of them wrote children’s books on the

The parameters of ‘underdevelopment’ have evolved from the post-war criteria of economic, industrial, and technological indicators, toward an emphasis on education and the agency of women as central to the developing process. They reflect the emergence of four defining concepts: self-reliance, interdependence in world systems, feminism, and human rights. With respect to self-reliance, development education reflected critical pedagogy’s models. Marshall (2007) observes that the field was influenced by the pedagogy of Paolo Freire, Julius Nyerere and Ivan Illich, with an emphasis on grassroots consciousness and “people deciding for themselves” (p. 41). By the 1980s, grass-roots programs that acknowledged and empowered the participants emerged (Gutek, 1993). Micro finance loans, as narrated in Mitali Perkins’ *Rickshaw Girl*, grew out of this movement.

The combined notions of critical consciousness and interdependence changed the conventional model of modernization theories that had seen these countries as problematic laggards in the telos of human progress. Instead of this comparative evaluation, a new ideological lens was adopted, that now saw the development of these nations as part of interconnected world relationships. In *Mud City*, Deborah Ellis illustrates how the
‘modernizing’ reach of Western multinationals in Pakistan is limited to the wealthy, rather than ‘developing’ the larger swathes of the population.

Feminism is the third paradigmatic shift. Since all the novels in this chapter feature problematic gender roles and relations, some background to the troubled relationship between “Western” feminism, and its third world version is necessary. At the beginning of the 1970s, Ester Boserup pointed out that development theory had underestimated the role of women in production. Her book, *Women’s Role in Economic Development* (1970), radically changed the field. By 1973, USAID had set up a WID (Women in Development) office. The UN’s Year of Women in 1975 and the subsequent Decade of Women (1976-1985) articulated transnational women’s movements. The interface between feminist theories and development has many forms: WID (Women in Development); WAD (Women and Development); GAD (Gender and Development); WED (Women, Environment, and Development); and PAD (Postmodernism and Development). All these theories propose development as a gendered process. Without going into too much detail, I would like to point out the main difference between WID and WAD since it is central to any representation of women from the South. The US sponsored Women in Development (WID) school of thought, which argues that women should be modernized, found a mounting attack from the Women and Development (WAD) perspective. Women from the developing countries of the South accused the WID approach of favoring a Western liberal feminist model that obscured the role of history, politics, culture, poverty and undervalued production. Much of the dispute arises out of the contention that “Western” models of modernity cannot be indiscriminately transplanted onto other socio-cultural and economic
scenarios. This was no toothless, theoretical dispute; development aid depended on the compliance of recipient countries. This debate raises the question, *does the book tackle the dilemma of modernizing the Third World, without undermining its autonomy?*

**Questioning the Narration of Third World Development**

Through a close reading of the text and images of five books on South Asia, I demonstrate that the representation of development is often caught between an opposition of cultural traditions and modernity. The six guiding questions, laid out in the previous chapter, guide the textual and visual analysis. In addition, the five questions posed in the overview of culture and development help to locate the texts in their surrounding macro-discourse, thereby lending a critical global perspective to the way we read. To recapitulate, these are:

- Through what processes is cultural change narrated in these books?
- Is there evidence of a shift in a ‘selective tradition’ in cultural representations?
- Does development entail an opposition between tradition and modernity? If so, are Western models of modernization privileged?
- Does the book tackle the dilemma of modernizing the Third World, without undermining its autonomy?

In many ways Gloria Whelan’s “selective” representation of Hindu culture in *Homeless Bird* (2000), begs the question “*Does development entail an opposition between tradition and modernity?”* Instead, Suzanne Fisher Staples problematizes this relationship. For the last twenty years, Staples has written fiction set in Pakistan. She embodies the time
arc of this study. Staples’ trilogy, comprising of *Shabanu* (1989), *Haveli* (1993), and *The House of Djinn* (2008) offers the possibility to plot evidence of a shift in a ‘selective tradition’ in cultural representations. Even so, Staples’ books are problematic with respect to the question, “Are Western models of modernization privileged?” Bangladesh is the setting for Mitali Perkins’ *Rickshaw Girl* (2008). Perkins’ narration of microfinance suggests an answer to the question, *how do these books tackle the dilemma of modernizing the Third World, without undermining its cultural autonomy?* Together, these five books offer very different perspectives on how Third World societies should be modernized.


*Homeless Bird* won the National Book Award in 2000. On her web page (www.gloriawhelan.com), the author writes that the book was inspired by a New York Times article about the Indian city of Vrindavan, the city of widows. Subsequently, a visit to an exhibition of quilts embroidered by Indian women, gave her the idea for her protagonist’s “triumph over abandonment and poverty.” In an interview with PBS’s
Elizabeth Farnsworth, Whelan confirms that she has never been to India, but that months of research went into *Homeless Bird* (Stewart, 2008). She has even included numerous Hindi words that are explained in a glossary at the end of the book. Publisher Harper Collins has an online reading group guide (see Appendix B).

Whelan’s award winning book narrates the coming-of-age of 13-year-old Koly, whose desperately poor parents unwittingly marry her to Hari, a sickly boy whose racking cough portends imminent death. Koly soon realizes that her marriage was in fact a last attempt to save his life; her dowry was just enough to pay for Hari’s doctor and a trip to Varanasi where he can dip himself in the purifying holy river, Ganges. The chilly water only hastens Hari’s death. A widow now, Koly becomes the Cinderella of the house. Her mother-in-law incessantly screams out: “Koly we need water!” “Koly sweep the courtyard! The geese have soiled it.” “Koly, the clothes you washed are still dirty.” Koly finds solace embroidering a quilt in her husband Hari’s memory, stitching in vignettes of her life. And thanks to her kindly, though helpless father-in-law, she learns to read, discovering the poetry of Rabindranath Tagore. At the death of her father-in-law, she is abandoned in Vrindavan, a city peopled by abandoned widows. With her embroidered quilt, and a copy of Tagore’s poems, she braves the streets of Vrindavan. A young rickshaw driver, Raji, takes Koly to a rehabilitation house for widows. There she finds friends and a job making marigold garlands, and finally as an ‘artist’ embroiderer. While she teaches Raji to read and write, and shares Tagore’s poems with him, a romance grows. The book ends with Raji’s return to his village. There he tends the fields, and prepares for Koly’s arrival. A separate embroidery room awaits his bride. In the meantime, she has
embroidered her third quilt; a story cloth of her days in Vrindavan. The author concludes with a reference to Tagore’s poem on the homeless bird, “flying at last to its home.”

**The good tradition.**

![Figure 3: Homeless Bird (2000)](image)

In *Words about Pictures*, Perry Nodelman affirms that “illustrators make the choices that create style . . . deliberately in the context of their conception of the narrative effect they intend” (1988, p. 78). Consequently, I wonder about the intended narrative effect of the cover of *Homeless Bird*, how the image and design support, extend, or problematize the narrative’s discourse, and what discourses are included and excluded in the image.

*Homeless Bird* has a cover image that evokes a traditional artistic style. Illustrator Robert Crawford’s rendering is reminiscent of Mughal miniatures. There is the eye for detail, the lack of a fore-grounded focus on the girl, the garden in the quilt, and the ornate passé-partout and border. Three visual discourses are dominant: culture (as in artistic style), the girl, and her activity. This is not about Koly and her friends, or malefactors. Nor is it
about Koly on the streets on Vrindavan in a white widow’s sari. It is about the girl and her art. The book cover clearly supports and extends the text’s discourse on the empowering act of pursuing one’s talent, and the endurance of India’s artistic tradition. The very title, *Homeless Bird*, is from a poem by Rabindranath Tagore, India’s only Nobel Prize winner for literature. Notwithstanding the textual and visual intertextual references to India’s artistic heritage, the title’s metaphoric free bird alludes to the inverse situation of a caged bird. Is there a cage, and if so, what is it? While acknowledging the “good tradition” of art and literature, Koly’s story is about cultural cages that thwart the flight of self-determination.

**Literacy, entrepreneurship, and philanthropy in development.**

Harper Collins’ reading guide (see Appendix B) introduces the book as a “moving look at Indian culture and one girl’s struggle to find her place in it.” Culture is central to the novel. In this discussion, I wish to go beyond pointing at cultural misrepresentations (such as meat eating Brahmins), the persistence of icons that presumably appeal to the implied audience (such as snake charmers), or even the simplified characterizations of good vs. evil. These observations have already been made in Susan Louise Stewart’s paper, “Beyond Borders: Reading ‘Other’ Places in Children’s Literature” (2008). Comparing *Homeless Bird* to a modern day Cinderella, she comments that “we see in *Homeless Bird*, a set of unfavorable characteristics associated with an unlikeable individual (the mother-in-law) and favorable characteristics associated with a likeable character (Koly). This binary burdens characters with ideological baggage and offers vexed representations of India” (2008, p.6). Koly’s tradition-bound mother-in-law is jealous, steals her money, exploits her,
and finally abandons her in Vrindavan. In contrast, Koly is hardworking, kind, honest, eager to learn, and creative. Drawing from the roadmap of questions, I extend Stewart’s commentary on Whelan’s Orientalism by investigating how selective cultural representations institute an intransigent opposition between tradition and modernity, and reading guides continue to propagate us/them binaries in the way a text is interpreted.

The plot revolves around the narration of processes that change culture and social relationships. But, why does Indian culture need to be modernized? Though Whelan mentions Jains, Sikhs, and a mosque, the story is firmly centered within the tropes of Brahmanic Hinduism. Koly is Brahmin, and marries into a Brahmin family. Holy cows, caste, the holy river Ganges, and dying in Varanasi are all iconic attributes of a Brahmanic way of life. Referring to “untouchables,” her mother-in-law tells her, “You must not let their shadow fall upon you . . . or it will pollute you” (p. 57). Thanks to the author’s assiduous research, festivals, temples, marriage and death rituals are all carefully described. When young Hari dies, his ashes are scattered over the Ganges, so that his soul would be “set free by returning his body to fire, water, and earth” (p. 54). These are undoubtedly informative details for readers who wish to learn about another culture. The problem arises when cultures are selectively represented in negative terms. There is no attempt to show the heterogeneity of cultural dynamics, or the potential of traditional ways of life. For instance, the question, “what or who is being contrasted?” leads to the opposition between a discourse on faith and science. When a doctor in Varanasi warns Hari’s parents that a dip in the Ganges will surely hasten Hari’s death, his mother retorts: “He may be learned about his medicine, but what does he know of the healing power of the Ganges?” (p. 38).
Traditional religious belief not only imprisons individual choice, but can be life threatening.

For Whelan, development means an opposition between tradition and modernity. Culture is also correlated to superstitions and the memory of long discontinued practices. When her mother expresses some consternation about the marriage to sickly Hari, she is told “You know if a wedding does not take place at the appointed time, some evil is sure to come to the bride” (p. 16). In a way, it is true. If a marriage is called off, social stigma will hound the girl. Soon widowed, Koly worries about her fate, especially since she “had been told stories of terrible days long ago when widows were thrown on the burning funeral pyres of their husbands” (pp. 33-34). The reference to sati, albeit historical, only reinforces the idea that Indian culture still lives in the shadows of horrific traditions. Postcolonial scholars have written copiously on the insistent references to sati. Narayanan (1997) observes that “The only function of the Present in such representations of Third-World contexts is to testify to the stubborn persistence of the Past in the guise of “unchanging traditions” (p. 48). As represented by Whelan, Hindu culture is still bound by these past practices, and is complicit with superstitions and disenfranchising social hierarchies. It needs to be modernized. For Whelan, development inevitably means an opposition between tradition and modernity.

Socio-cultural practices also fall short of the ideals of modernity. In *Homeless Bird*, the practice of arranged marriages is poised against the ‘modern’ will of individual choice. The novel opens with the ill-fated arranged marriage of 13 year old Koly. Whelan chooses to narrate Koly’s arranged marriage as propelled by poverty, greed, and deceit.
Finally, Koly finds happiness in a love marriage. Since the practice of arranged marriages is an oft repeated icon for non-modern traditions in many of the novels discussed in this chapter, it merits pause. Suarez-Orozco and Qin-Hillard (2004) remind us that, 

“‘love marriage’ is a historically new and, until very recently, ethnographically rare practice and the idea of ‘‘arranged marriage’’ - the preferred marriage practice found in most ethnographic and historical records - can open up more nuanced and sophisticated understandings of human nature and culture, history and kinship, social organization and values. If the child learns nothing else, she should know that there is nothing natural about love marriages. (pp. 4–5) 

I argue that the use of a focalizing first person narration excludes the possibility of a “more nuanced and sophisticated understanding” of cultural and social complexities. The novel is written from Koly’s perspective. It is a voice that readers would sympathize with. When Koly realizes that all her in-laws wanted was her dowry, she wonders, “Was my marriage to be like the buying of a sack of yams in the marketplace? (p.13). Later, when her sister-in-law’s marriage is arranged, Koly asks her, “how can you tell if you will love him?” Chandra replies, “I will learn to love him” (p. 79). The empathy between the narrator and reader is consolidated when Koly persists. This time she asks, “What if he isn’t a good husband?’ Chandra answers, “If I am good wife, he will be good to me.” This conversation bears witness that the path towards modernity is a self-awareness that questions, whereas traditional worldviews rationalize a pre-determined fate.

In Colonial Desire, (1995), Young points out that culture “always takes part in an antithetical pair” of difference “because culture is always a dialectical process, inscribing and expelling its alterity” (p. 30). Postcolonial theories, emerging from literary criticism (Pratt, 1992; Said, 1978; 1993), exposed how “Otherness” was produced on the basis of
binaries such as civilized/primitive, tolerance/intolerance, reason/irrationality, culture/nature, and traditional/modern. The West as modern and developed provides the criteria for evaluating non-western societies as under-developed or at best, developing (Hall, 1996, p.186). In this sense, development becomes a path towards Western models of modernity and away from indigenous cultural traditions. The undermining of local knowledge, agency, and culture is often politically unsettling when it confronts a sense of autonomous identity. The “inscribing” of alterity between the cultural other and the narrator/reader is further endorsed in the publisher’s reading guide. It speaks to the guiding question, “what or who is being contrasted textually?” The teaching guide observes that the novel “provides a distinctly different perspective on growing up than the one we experience in the United States.” The insistence on us/them comparisons and differences continues. Students are asked: “In Koly’s society in India, life is highly defined from beginning to end. How does this compare to life in the United States?” Much of the pre-determination referred to is attributed to arranged marriages. Note the wording of the question. It does not ask for possible reasons for this “highly defined life,” but by soliciting immediate comparisons, the question leads readers to evaluate Indian culture, rather than first understand it. Students are then asked: “In India, young girls are expected to marry. How does this affect their families’ treatment of them? What do the families gain from a good marriage? How is Koly affected by this expectation to marry? How would your life be different if you were expected to marry in a few years?” The discourse of reading guides continually reveals a disturbing tendency to focus on evaluative comparisons, and
sweeping cultural extrapolations. Is this as an example of colonial discourse? Or, is the urge to compare motivated by the pedagogical need to be relevant to the reader’s context?

What does Whelan propose as a way out of hindering cultural traditions? And, how does she tackle the dilemma of modernizing a developing country, without undermining its autonomy? Whelan’s response is education, employment for women (with a flexible schedule), industrial capital in cities, technology, entrepreneurship, and good government programs in the agricultural sector. Koly’s father-in-law teaches her to read. He gives her a book of Tagore’s poems which she cherishes even in her lonely days in Vrindavan. However, literacy alone is inadequate; women need to be independent in the work field. Koly finds a job in which her talent as an embroiderer is appreciated and well-paid. In the economics of development, work without temperance is unproductive. Koly is encouraged to save part of her wages, and Raji saves enough money to return to his village, buy what he needs for the next crop, and build a house.

Education leads to the development of science and technology, with computers as the symbol of modernity. Computers are introduced in Koly’s father-in-law’s school, making him quasi obsolete. Koly’s sister-in-law, Chandra, marries a young man who was educated in “a mission school” and gets a job working with computers. In a more rural context, science and technology promote agricultural production. Raji returns to his village. Now literate, he writes Koly that “A man from the government is showing me how to make my land more fertile” (pp. 194-195).

But how is Koly rescued from the streets of Vrindavan in the first place? In the reading guide, students consider “who can be credited for the good turn Koly’s life
eventually takes?” It is thanks to Mrs. Devi, a rich philanthropist who finances the widow’s shelter where the women are fed, clothed, protected, and found work. Whelan’s sociological charting of development does not end there. Mrs. Devi is carrying out the will of her father, who had bequeathed his wealth to the cause of abandoned widows. Himself the child of a widow, he became a self-made successful businessman thanks to an innovative design of a drill. The discourse is two-fold: development depends on the economics of technological innovation, industrialization, and the drive of free enterprise. Entrepreneurship, as in the case of Koly, is the agent of progress that engenders economic independence and self-agency. The advance of material wealth and technology should, however, be tempered with the compassion of philanthropy. In short, capitalism should have a human face, and development is a top-down process. Whereas for Whelan culturally endorsed social relationships are changed because of economic development, Suzanne Fisher Staples’ novels tackle the political aspect. For both authors, however, a wealthy upper class fires the engine of modernization.

It cannot be overstated that an awareness of the prevailing discourses on development and modernity encourages readers to identify and question the narration of social transformation, thereby forging substantive links between the text and the contemporary world. In addition, when educators are sensitive to postcolonial criticism, alternative readings emerge that enable readers to resist hierarchical binaries which collapse into a West and the rest mindset. The task of educators becomes even more daunting when authors offer a much more complex narrative than what is marketed by
publishers. The following section on the novels of Suzanne Staples Fisher underscores this gap between the literary narrative and institutionalized practices.


Apart from authors of South Asian heritage,⁹ Suzanne Fisher Staples is the most prolific contemporary children’s writer on India and Pakistan. Even more significant, her first books on the region appeared in the early 1990s, at a time when there was little children’s literature on the area. She worked for many years as a United Press International Correspondent in Hong Kong, Afghanistan, India and Pakistan. In 1985, USAID asked Staples to go to Pakistan, to do a study of women and the cycle of poverty. The outcome of this experience was *Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind* (1989), a 1990 Newbery Honor book that draws from the years when she became involved with the nomads of the Cholistan Desert, who are the main characters in the book. In *Shabanu*, the eponymous character narrates her childhood in the deserts of Cholistan. Its sequel, *Haveli* (1993), is set in modern-day Lahore, and, to quote the jacket, “her [Shabanu’s] passionate struggle against the traditions of an ancient past.” After a hiatus of 15 years, *The House of Djinn* (2008)

⁹ See [http://www.poojamakhijani.com/sakidlit.html](http://www.poojamakhijani.com/sakidlit.html), a website maintained by author Pooja Makhijani, for an updated annotated bibliography on South Asia and the South Asian diaspora in children’s literature. SAWNET (South Asian Women’s Net) at [http://www.sawnet.org/kidsbooks/](http://www.sawnet.org/kidsbooks/), maintains a list of books published in North America and in South Asian countries.
continues to examine the juxtaposition of tradition and modernity, but this time the discourse extends toward the building of a ‘modern’ Pakistan. *Under the Persimmon Tree* (2005), which is discussed in chapter 5, is set in post 9/11 Pakistan, with a war raging in Afghanistan. Taken as a whole, these four books cover the arc of 20 years in the region. As a longitudinal study they present the unique possibility of noting how the discourse on Islamic cultural traditions, development, and modernity has evolved in the works of one author, possibly in response to the changing political situation in the area.

Staples also wrote a book on India. *Shiva’s Fire* (2000) was written nearly twenty years after her four-year stay in India (1979-1983) as chief of UPI’s South Asian bureau. With her characteristic eye for meticulous research, Staples sets *Shiva’s Fire* against a background of Bharata Natyam, the classical Indian dance style. *Shiva’s Fire* will not be looked at since it is set in the years immediately after India’s independence, and is hence more in the genre of historical fiction. But it is important to note that like *Like Homeless Bird* (2000) and *Rickshaw Girl* (2008), this too is a coming-of-age story in which a girl’s talent enables her to fulfill her dreams and find happiness. It is significant that in all these novels, culture as an expressive art form is clearly distinguished from culture as a way of life that determines social practices.

**The “Selective Tradition” of Book Covers.**

Mimicking the way readers first interact with a book, both materially and conceptually, this section starts with a comparative visual analysis of the trilogy’s book covers. Drawing from the field of cultural media studies and social semiotics, the aim is to look at how these visual representations are deployed to convey a certain discourse on
the South Asian woman, and the implied relationship they imbue between the viewer and the viewed. The premise is that visuals on book covers are neither accidental, nor innocent of ideological intention. They are socially produced, distributed, and consumed. In order to communicate effectively, book covers need to mobilize pictorial, photographic, and graphic design conventions (framing, perspective, background, etc.) that resound with common social practices in meaning making.

My interest lies in exploring the “selective tradition” of these representations, or “which kinds of meaning get systematically and regularly constructed around particular events” (Hall, 1982, p. 67). Furthermore, since Staples’ books have been circulating for nearly two decades, they present a unique opportunity to identify and explain shifts in modes of representation. I propose that changes in modes of representation may well be indicative of corresponding shifts in the way we relate to and ‘know’ the cultural ‘other.’

![Image of book covers](image.jpg)


The above book covers juxtapose previous editions (on the left) with more recent editions. There are two major similarities and differences: (1) the book covers, either
explicitly or implicitly, focus on a veiled woman, and (2) the later editions are photographs and not paintings. The representation of the veiled South Asian woman is not confined to Staples’ books. In this chapter alone, all the books’ covers present a semi-veiled girl or woman. In itself this is not unremarkable, since many Muslim and Hindu women wear head covers (chad or dupatta). The question, however, is its ideological import: what broader societal discourse are these images appealing to and constructing?

Postcolonial theorists claim that the “veiled woman” stands in for a larger discourse in which the covered head (chad) is a metaphor for disempowerment, and the need to be liberated by the West. In “The Discourse of the Veil” (1992), Leila Ahmed notes that “the peculiar practices of Islam with respect to women had always formed part of the Western narrative of the quintessential otherness and inferiority of Islam” (p. 1284). She adds that veiling, “to Western eyes” became the most visible marker for the oppression of women, even though Muslim women have also adopted the veil as a political statement (Iran in the 1970s) or a strategy (Algeria in the 1950s). In her essay, “Representing Islam: Female Subjects in Suzanne Fisher Staples’s Novels” (2007), Clare Bradford considers how the covers of Staples’ trilogy markets representations of Muslim girls and women to Western audiences. Most notably, Bradford’s paper begins with a comment that “the desire for unveiling, which was such a prominent aspect of Western discourses after 9/11 and which, it was proposed, signified the liberation of Muslim women, produced a homogenized and over-simplified version of the burqa and of Islamic societies” (p. 47). Marshalling postcolonial theorists such as Edward Said and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Bradford affirms that “the stereotypes and assumptions evident in the
book covers are consonant with how these novels represent female subjects; as the objects of Western eyes, which see them as exotic, mysterious, and ineffably other” (p. 60). Her analysis also serves as a warning to those who assume that the “Western world offers the normative model of female agency” (p. 60). Bradford concludes:

Staples relies here on a concept common in literary humanism, where identity is envisaged as a transcendent and essential core of selfhood that exists independently of cultural and ideological systems. (p. 58)

It would appear that in terms of tradition and modernity, the veil crystallizes the deep seated quandary between viewing traditional cultures as exotic, and modernity’s ‘unveiling’ of individual identity and agency. Nonetheless, in spite of the selective representation on the book covers, the following textual analysis reveals that Staples attempts to problematize the burqa as an icon of oppression.

To this already well-argued debate on the politics of cultural representation, I add a more epistemological understanding of representations on book covers. Comparing the original 1989 cover of Shabanu with its 2003 version, or the 1993 cover of Haveli with its 1995 edition by the same publisher (see figure 4), there are is one major difference; the materiality of medium and mode. What does this shift from a painting to photograph implicate? It is an important question, since this “repackaging” is a general trend in the publishing industry of young adult fiction (Yampbell, 2005). There is, of course, the need to appeal to a visually savvy teen market. Or as Craig Walker, vice-president of Scholastic notes:

It’s amazing how quickly art looks old. Style has changed so much for teenagers. . . . older covers were painted from models and look really dated. We wanted to
give these books a more contemporary look and give teens the kind of graphic image they’re now used to looking at. (as cited in Yampbell, 2005, p. 357)

But, what are photographs doing to the genre of contemporary realism? Roland Barthes, one of the first semiologists to look at photographs within a cultural and social fabric, noted in Camera Lucida that every photograph “is a certificate of presence” (Barthes, 1981, p. 87) with a “power of authentication” that exceeds the “power of representation” (p. 89). Shabanu (1989) and Haveli (1993) were first published in the heyday of debates surrounding the ‘authenticity’ of an outsider author. I suggest that its later editions, with photographs on its covers, endorse the text with a ‘truth’ factor. When this is coupled with a predilection for a first-person, present tense narration, the proximity between image, text, and reality shrinks. One might argue that this is not problematic, since all these novels are dealing with “real” contemporary issues. Even so, what remains troublesome is that in blurring the fine line between fiction and reality, readers are implicitly encouraged to regard the perspective and focus of one text as representative of a much more complex and diverse reality. This inductive mode of reasoning will also be noticed in the questions posed in reading guides. What is forgotten is that fiction selects those aspects of reality, which when woven together, make for a compelling story. Recognizing the selective process of narration, it is necessary to ask what discourses are included and excluded in the text. And acknowledging the intersection of fiction and reality, it is even more imperative to read the texts within the context of discourses that have actually shaped global relationships. Development as modernization is one of them.
In the following textual analysis, the issue of inequitable gender and gender relations underlie the triad tradition-development-modernity, both in the texts and reading guides. Instead, an awareness of development theories and praxis opens up the oft-ignored aspect of rural development. In the analysis of *Haveli*, the critique of postcolonial feminists enables the reader to consider how individual female empowerment can come about from within a tradition, thereby resisting an unexamined gendered discourse. The last book in Staples trilogy, *The House of Djinn*, constitutes a redrawing of the relationship between traditional gender roles and modernity, seeking reconciliation rather than opposition.

*Shabanu (1989): “soon enough he’ll turn off the water”*

Shabanu is an eleven-year old girl growing up in the Cholistan Desert (Pakistan), where her family raises camels. Still pre-pubescent, Shabanu is free to tend to the camels and accompany her father to the camel fair. Of course, Shabanu knows that everything will change once she and her sister are married. The story takes a turn when a family feud erupts between her sister’s fiancé and Nazir, a local wealthy land owner. Just before the marriage, Nazir kills Phulan’s fiancé. She marries Shabanu’s betrothed instead. Nazir’s brother, Rahim, is a wealthy politician who lives in Lahore. Eager to maintain peace in his constituency, he makes amends for his brother’s rash behavior by showering Shabanu’s family with gifts. In the meantime, struck by Shabanu’s fiercely independent spirit, he falls in love with her. Shabanu must become his fourth wife. Rahim is her father’s age. At first, Shabanu is determined to live her own life, but gradually she accepts that “her fate is sealed.” The book ends with Shabanu recalling her aunt Sharma’s advice, “The secret is
keeping your innermost beauty, the secrets of your soul, locked in your heart ... so that he [Rahim] must always reach out to you for it” (p. 240). It is the only way to ensure that Rahim’s older wives will not make her their “slave.” The book includes a map, glossary and pronunciation guide. The 2003 edition has a discussion guide at the end of the book. An extended version is available on the publisher’s Web site (see Appendix C).

Categories, comparisons, and conflations.

Foucault remarks that discourse is kept in circulation through commentary. Mills (1997) describes the Foucauldian notion of commentary as “the process whereby books are kept in print and in circulation by critics writing about them” (p. 144). Hence, scholarly commentary and discussion guides provide insight into meanings given to a text, how texts are contested, and to some extent, canonized in the curriculum. When viewed together, this discursive formation can point to what discourses are included and excluded.

More than any other young adult book on South Asia, Staples’ *Shabanu* is the most cited and commented upon. When it appeared in 1989, multiculturalism was at the center of national discourse, and the novel was caught up in the debate over cultural authenticity and the insider/outsider perspective. In fact, the furor over *Shabanu* was so strident that the author wrote a defense in “Bookbird.” It was entitled “Writing about the Islamic World: An American Author’s Thoughts on Authenticity” (1997). The novel has been praised by stalwarts of children’s literature such as Hazel Rochman (1993) and Zena Sutherland (1997). Instead, Stewart (2005) accuses it of trite stereotypical profiling. Margaret Crocco Smith (2005) describes the attraction and difficulties encountered when
a book like *Shabanu* is taught in US middle-school social studies classrooms, as a way to bridge cultural differences. Her study is the result of six years of teaching the book as part of a teacher education course. Using a combined framework of post-colonialism, feminist theorizing, critical theories, and a grounded-theory approach, Crocco considers insider objections to the stereotypical and exotic essentializing of Islamic and Pakistani culture at a time of “heightened sensitivities and unprecedented urgency” (p. 562). With the critical role of Pakistan in American politics abroad, the book continues to be discussed in scholarly journals (Bradford, 2007; Donovan, 2007). It reminds us that even young adult literature has to answer to the politics of cultural representations.

According to Foucault, societal discourse is “ordered” through “principles of classification” (1972, p. 25). How is *Shabanu* classified in the “order of discourse”? Many books on children’s literature are structured thematically. A quick survey showed that most scholars classified *Shabanu* in terms of gender roles, cultural conflict, and the protagonist’s commendable personal traits (Huck et al, 2001; Norton, 2009; Rochman, 1993; Rudman, 1995; Sutherland, 1997). For example, Rudman (1995) categorizes the book under gender roles, describing it as an example of “a woman who dares to be different but at last decides to submit . . . to the customs of her culture” (p.189). Zena Sutherland’s *Children & Books* (1997) refers to the “cultural conflict” in *Shabanu*. Similarly, Hazel Rochman (1993) includes it under the section on “family matters” to highlight the conflict with traditional patriarchal roles. Rochman (1993) praises how the book shows “a sense of individual personality within a tight structure” (p. 106). Shabanu’s character traits are also emphasized
in the seventh edition of Charlotte Huck’s *Children’s Literature in the Elementary School* (2001): “It is difficult to imagine that this story takes place in the modern world (italics added). *Shabanu* and its sequel *Haveli* would certainly lead readers to discuss women’s roles in other countries as well in their own” (p. 441). It would appear that an individual woman’s agency is taken as evidence of an eventual social transformation and modernization.

Regardless of whether one praises or critiques Staples’ novels, they undeniably raise a noteworthy question: Is Muslim culture reconcilable with modernity’s championing of individual choice and gender empowerment? My intention is to point to a dissonance between the text and the publisher’s hook on the cover and its discussion guide. Whereas the publisher’s contributions work on sharp discursive contrasts between tradition and modernity, the text is far more nuanced.

The conflict between tradition and individual freedom is endorsed by the cover’s description of the book, “As tradition dictates, Shabanu’s father has arranged for her to be married in the coming year, though this will mean an end to her liberty.” Random House’s reader’s guide further supports a polarity between tradition and modernity that revolves around the female. The first question is gender related: “Explain how having no brothers has shaped Shabanu. Do you believe that having a son is a high priority for a family in your culture?” (Appendix C). The question is rhetorical at best, but serves to emphasize a differential discourse on gender equality. In another question, the self-serving rhetoric of cultural comparison continues, but this time the story becomes a synecdoche for all
Muslims: “In the United States, how long are the young considered children? How long does childhood last for Muslims? At thirteen, Phulan is supposed to be woman” (Appendix C). Such questions that insist on comparisons between the readers’ “American” experience and Muslim culture, as represented in one book, encourage hasty generalizations that reinforce stereotypes. In his seminal book *Orientalism*, Edward Said remarks that underlying the categories of generalizations is the “rigidly binomial opposition of ‘ours and ‘theirs,’ with the former always encroaching upon the latter” (1979, p. 227). Undoubtedly, the “encroaching” of ‘ours’ on ‘theirs’ becomes morally valid in worst case scenarios. At one point in the story, Shabanu rescues her sister from being raped. Phulan was walking alone on the bank, “slender hips swaying.” Shabanu wonders, “What is she thinking? Mama has warned us dozens of times” (p. 154). The reading guide poses a pertinent question: “On p. 154, why is Shabanu angry at her sister? “She was asking for it” is still used as a defense by rapists. Does Shabanu’s anger show an antifeminist response or is she, too, a victim, but a victim of her culture?” (Appendix C). Underpinning the concluding question is the allusion that if you are not a feminist, you are a “victim” to your culture. A problem arises when these connections are made with reference to rape. The subtext is that only feminists are against rape, or can protect the rights of women. Traditional cultures cannot. The interpellation of a Western feminist paradigm of modernity is brought to fore in Donna Norton’s (2009) commentary on the veiled head cover. Norton (2009) suggests teaching activities that “clarify values” pertaining to veiling and gender roles. The reading guide asks: “Point to her [Phulan] conflicting feelings about her role and her forthcoming marriage to Hamir. Why does she wear a black *chador*?” (p. 345).
Worded in this manner, veiled clothing becomes a symbol for the muffling of female agency, just as arranged marriages suggest a lack of individual choice. If, however, readers are encouraged to look closer at the text, a far more complex rendering of these issues unfolds. In spite of what Stewart (2005) refers to as “a trite romantic plot-line” (p. 566), Staples is aware that reality is not so one-dimensional, and is rife with contradictions. I take as an example the imagery of a woman’s covered head. When Phulan chooses to wear a black *chadr*, Shabanu, the first-person narrator, remarks that, “We are good Muslims, but God doesn’t care what color *chadr* she wears. She has chosen black and wears it like a martyr” (p. 18). The *chadr* is what you make of it. It can be wrapped like a “shroud” (p. 75), it protects one from the sun (p. 34), it is a towel, a water filter, and a red one can look “regal” (p. 92). In *The House of Djinn*, Staples will go beyond the multiple functions and connotations of *chadr*. There, with a narrative sleight of hand, the *burqa* (which fully covers the body) becomes a disguise that enables escape.

While emphasizing culture and gender, the publisher’s reading guide not only leads the readers towards privileging Western perspectives, but obscures the complexity of the text. A critical global perspective that combines discourse analysis and knowledge of contending theories enables readers to ask pertinent questions which emerged from the theoretical overview: Does development entail an opposition between tradition and modernity? If so, are Western models of modernization being privileged? Do these books tackle the dilemma of modernizing the Third World, while not undermining its autonomy?
Rural development.

When educators are made aware of development theories that critique an overemphasis on individual rights while obscuring the basic economic need of developing countries, a subtext on rural development is revealed. The tendency to highlight individualism and gender, disregards fundamental basic needs such as water, food, education, health, and jobs. Admittedly, it is a dilemma that has plagued development theorists and policy makers. Given limited resources, how does one alleviate poverty? Through the material construction of infrastructures that satisfy basic needs and rights such as water, food, health, and education, or will the cultivation of the human spirit’s individual agency lead to progress? Curriculum suggestions and commentary on Shabanu (and its sequels) tilt towards the latter.

I suggest that contrary to the dominant discourse of the commentary and reading guide, development is germane to the book. Staples draws from her experience as a USAID worker. She comments that “While the major thrust of USAID's projects was to build or improve roads, tunnels, bridges, and irrigation canals, the agency sought ways to improve the lives of the poorest people of Pakistan, those who live in rural areas. The idea was to improve health, nutrition, and housing for families by concentrating on women” (Staples, 1995). In fact, seen through the lens of rural development, water irrigation is what drives the plot. Set in the Cholistan desert, the novel is strewn with references to water. It opens with a drought, and the ebbing water level at the basin. We are told that it is infested with worms (p. 1). Every drop is like “a diamond” (p. 12), a “gem” (p. 121) which has to be conserved. Puddles are “great silver sheets” (p. 179). Stylistic embellishments aside, water
is what drives the plot. The story turns when Phulan’s fiancé, Hamir, is shot by Nazir Mohammed’s men. It is a family feud that is centered on land and agricultural development. Hamir’s father had built an irrigation channel on his land. Before it “was a patch of dust, good only for browsing camels” (p. 147). Enraged by his competing success, Nazir kills him. On the eve of Hamir’s wedding, Nazir threatens to cut off his water supply. And finally, Shabanu is told that if she did not agree to marry Rahim (Nazir’s brother), Nazir will “turn off the water and the land will be ruined” (p. 192). Surprisingly, the commentary on Shabanu excludes any reference to a discourse that connects the persistence of traditional cultural models to the socio-economics of basic needs. Neither does the reading guide lead students to consider this interpretation.

The notion of individual choice constitutes a major shift from the concerns of the basic needs of Third World development to modernity. The novel concludes with Shabanu’s resignation to her marriage to a man who is her father’s age. The family feud seems to be settled for the time being, and her family is well taken care of by her future husband. But, Shabanu’s spirit will not be easily dampened. Her independent minded aunt Sharma, advises her that “No matter what happens, you have you. That is the important thing. And as long as you have you, there is always a choice” (p. 225). But what will enable such a self-defining choice?

The story ends with Shabanu wondering, “Perhaps I could learn to read and write. Would he be afraid of a woman who can do such things?” (p. 231). In his book, Modernity and Self-Identity, Anthony Giddens proposes that “doubt is a pervasive feature
of modern critical thought” and the modern self constitutes itself reflexively “amid a puzzling diversity of options and possibilities” (1991, p.3). Modern institutions, such as education, give individuals a plurality of choice. Shabanu’s ‘wondering’ about her future in terms of such possibilities, is a step toward a ‘modern’ self-making of identity. The nexus between a modern self-identity (as against a culturally endorsed one) and literacy or the pursuance of one’s talent is a discourse which runs through most, if not all the books. In Homeless Bird, the protagonist found a new life and happiness through literacy and her talent at sewing. In the next chapter, the auto-fictive stories on Iqbal Masih, a young boy who became an anti-child labor activist, all regard literacy as an essential prerequisite to freedom.

_Haveli_ (1993): “You always have a choice.”

_Haveli_ is almost twice the length of _Shabanu_. In this sequel, Shabanu experiences the jealousy and “evil mischief” of Rahim’s other three wives. She is looked down upon as the illiterate ‘peasant girl’ whose hold on her elderly husband’s undivided adoration could only be due to witchcraft. Shabanu, now a mother of five year old Mumtaz, faces daily challenges to her position in her husband’s household, and threats to her daughter’s future. When the oldest wife’s machinations culminate in accusations of adultery, Shabanu realizes that her life is at stake. She moves to the city of Lahore to live with her sister-in-law Selma in the _haveli_, the family’s old ancestral home. There, she arranges for her young daughter’s and her own education. The plot thickens as Shabanu falls in love with Omar, Rahim’s American educated nephew. Theirs is an impossible relationship. In an attempt to “secure the future of the tribe and their land,” (p. 85), Omar will soon marry
Leyla, Rahim’s daughter by his oldest wife. Rahim’s oldest son Ahmed is a sickly, “hopelessly inept,” “idiot boy.” To appease his troublesome brother Nazir, Ahmed will marry Nazir’s daughter Zabo. In exchange, Nazir will get hundreds of acres of land. Shabanu is once again caught up in a family feud between Rahim and his brother Nazir. Amidst the opulent preparations for the two weddings, Shabanu helps Zabo hatch a plan to escape from an ill-fated marriage. Their plans go awry. Soon after Ahmed and Zabo’s marriage, Nazir arranges to have Ahmed shot, so that his newly acquired land will not be shared. And his daughter, Zabo, is kept under lock and key. From then on, the story cascades into a series of revenge killings. Rahim, who must exact vengeance for his son’s death, is shot in a gunfight with Nazir’s bodyguards. Shabanu is captured by Nazir’s men. Nazir tells her, “It is the duty of a good man to marry his brother’s widow” (p. 280). Omar returns to avenge family honor. In the chaos of the gunfight and shelling, Zabo escapes with Shabanu. Pursued by Nazir’s men, Zabo is shot, and Shabanu narrowly escapes. Shabanu decides that it would be best that she be taken for dead too. Her daughter Mumtaz is safe with her parents in Cholistan. With her husband dead, she is adamant not to return to Rahim’s other widows. She returns to the haveli in Lahore. There, she takes refuge in the haveli’s rooftop pavilion. For the world, she is dead. Only her sister-in-law Selma, and Samiya, the tutor, know that she is alive.

The ‘gendered’ discourse of modernity.

Development and modernity are often equated with economic production and an increase in personal income. In contrast, the “capability approach” to development, as espoused by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, focuses on what people are effectively
able to do and to be; that is, on their capabilities. In *Development as Freedom*, Amartya Sen (1999) remarks that indices such as the growth of gross national product, or of individual incomes are limited views of development; people must have the substantive opportunities and freedom of choice to lead the lives they want to.

Seen in this light, *Haveli* can be read as a comment that wealth does not ensure modernity. Shabanu marries a wealthy landowner and politician. And with him, she marries into a family of “feudal grandees” (p.173) whose inherited wealth includes land, mansions, and even a retinue of armed bodyguards. They drive air-conditioned sedans, reek of French perfume, and their wives (except for Shabanu) are educated socialites. Bound by clans and divided by family feuds, their lives are defined and controlled by traditional modes of governing social relations.

Tradition is embodied in the bio-politics of gender relationships. In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault (1978) describes the technologies used to manage populations as ‘biopolitics’ or ‘biopower.’ According to Foucault, sexuality was a key factor in this process and became the means by which populations can be controlled. Although Foucault rarely refers to women and gender, the relationships he draws between power, the body and sexuality has influenced numerous feminist scholars, such as Sandra Bartky, Susan Bordo and Judith Butler. In *Haveli*, property, politics, and development are all inscribed on the female body. Women are offered in marriage as “peace offerings” (p. 29) to settle land disputes. First cousins marry to strengthen the clan’s political clout, so that the “reuniting of their lands signaled to their enemies that they stood undivided and strong” (p. 148). And
a woman’s value is in direct proportion to the number of sons she bears, or the extent to which she ensures the perpetuation of patriarchy.

Shabanu’s resistance and final escape from patriarchal control and normative gender relationships are central to this novel’s plot. Bradford (2007) comments that, “A key strategy in Staples’s novels is the construction of protagonists treated as exceptional within their cultures and hence as more “like us” than those homogenized women with whom they are compared” (p. 50). Three “exceptional” characters operate on the margins of their socio-cultural context, two women (Shabanu and Sharma) and Omar. Bradford adds that Shabanu and her aunt Sharma work within the patriarchal system, employing strategies that accord with Orientalist stereotypes of Eastern women as devious, and inferior. Rather than accusations of Orientalism, I shall demonstrate how patriarchal power relations are challenged through reproductive control, the exercise of choice, and literacy. Viewing the text through the lenses of cultural traditions, development and modernity, enables the reader to bring to light a multidimensional discourse on social transformation that connects agency of body, to awareness of the Self and one’s social existence.

Amartya Sen (1999) maintains that “What people can positively achieve is influenced by economic opportunities, political liberties, social powers, and the enabling conditions of good health, basic education, and the encouragement and cultivation of initiatives” (p. 5). He adds that social opportunities such as education, health care, female literacy and schooling effect fertility behavior (pp. 40-41) and are important contributions to development. In Haveli, aunt Sharma provides Shabanu and Zabo with a contraceptive herbal vine. Random House’s reading guide describes aunt Sharma, as “a new type of
woman in the Islamic culture - she gives Shabanu a means of birth control, and she offers Zabo and Shabanu an escape from tradition.” It asks, “Do you feel the author means for you to think of her as a sympathetic character? If so, do you think she represents the future of women in Pakistan?” (Appendix C). The guide’s focus on the old versus the “new,” fails to recognize that aunt Sharma can be viewed as a bridge between the present and the “future,” between tradition and modernity. After all, her herbal contraceptive device suggests that traditional ways can also offer women the means to control their bodies. It is also ‘illiterate,’ peasant Sharma who voices the ‘modern’ notion of individual choice, “You always have a choice,” she tells Shabanu, “And that is why you act wisely. Because you choose” (p. 267). Shabanu chooses to become literate, and to give her daughter an education.

Empirical work in third world development has shown that active female agency influences the lives of all people – men, women, and children, thereby changing cultural traditions. When women are educated and enter the workforce, they not only make a positive contribution to a country’s economic growth, but become the engine of change in future generations (Sen, 1999). Acutely aware of her own illiteracy, Shabanu dreams that her daughter Mumtaz will become an engineer, and “fend for herself.” She persuades her husband to take her to Lahore, where she can arrange for a tutor, “I want Mumtaz to grow up knowing how to read, and to learn a vocation. And / want to learn to read properly, and I want to study music” (p. 87). When asked why she wants to know how to read, Shabanu replies, “I want to learn about the world I’m in.” In Lahore, she finds a tutor, Samiya, a “Christian widow.” This latent connection between education and Christianity persists in
other novels. In the next chapter, Francesco D’Adamo’s fictionalized account of the life of human rights activist Iqbal Masih also connects Christianity to the empowerment of individuals.

Unfortunately, education may give one a job and independence, but it need not change traditional gender relationships. After all, Rahim is educated and a prominent member of the Lahore provincial assembly, yet he has four wives, and does not flinch from arranging marriages that serve his clan’s political standing. He lavishes Shabanu with gifts and attention in return for her sexual adroitness. But, he rarely listens or talks to her.

Bradford (2007) observes that Staples demonizes Muslim men. Men hunt down women to rape or kill them, polygamy seems to serve their lust, and even the gentler men are subservient to cultural habits. In contrast, Omar includes the women in the conversation, and “he seemed to be interested in what she (Shabanu) thought” (p. 129). Why is he so different? Is it his American education?

Pakistan and America are contrasted in economic, socio-cultural and political terms. Omar studied agriculture in America. For him, America is a land where “you can be poor one day . . . and the next you can be wealthy. . . . nothing is impossible. It’s a wonderful place.” He adds, “I will never regard women in the old way” (pp.161-162). He converses with his betrothed, which is, according to Shabanu “a very modern notion” and is “probably how young people in America socialized” (p.196). America is the paradigm of modernity, the land of opportunity, the dream maker, and the gender equalizer. Above all, living in America “makes people think differently” (p. 191). The correspondence of an American influence with change is reinforced in publisher Random House’s discussion
guide (Appendix D). Readers are asked, “The exposition is also known as the rising action. Staples is building toward the climax, or turning point, in her story. How does Omar’s return from America change the situation? Tell how you think the story might have ended differently if he had not come back.” Notably, rather than recognizing Shabanu’s decision to move to Lahore as a narrative turning point, the guide leads readers to associate America with progressive change abroad. When it comes to the narrative of America as a model ‘modern’ nation that should be emulated abroad, the text and guide collude in constructing a “legitimate perspective” of America as the epitome of modernity, from which the reader can evaluate development in the Third World. This narration of nation (to borrow a phrase from Homi Bhabha) is further developed in *The House of Djinn*.

*The House of Djinn* (2008): “Things must change if Pakistan is to survive.”

The story fast forwards ten years, this time centering around 15 year old Mumtaz and her cousin Jameel. Shabanu’s daughter, Mumtaz, has been living in Lahore with Baba Mahsood (now the head of the tribe), his son Omar and his wife Leyla, and their son Jaffar. Leyla treats her like a “servant” behind her husband’s back, never failing to remind Mumtaz that her mother was the daughter of nomadic camel herders. Mumtaz’s best friend is her cousin Jameel, who lives in San Francisco, but visits Lahore every summer. The story shuttles back and forth between San Francisco and Lahore. To a large extent, theirs is a changed world. They go to school, live by their mobiles and IPods, and even experience the “multicultural” modern world, where Muslims date Jews and Hindus. Unbeknownst to the ‘elders’ both Mumtaz and Jameel experience their first teenage romance; Jameel falls in love with Chloe, a Jewish girl who shares his passion for skateboarding, and Mumtaz is
smitten by her tennis coach Jagdish, an Indian Hindu. In the meantime, Shabanu, who has been “living like the dead” in the haveli’s summer pavilion, decides that it is time to come out of hiding. She is troubled that Mumtaz will not be able to complete her education, since Leyla is planning to marry her off to a “boy from the farm.” After ten years, mother and daughter meet. With the sudden death of Baba Mahsood, events precipitate. Omar learns that Shabanu is still alive. Jameel is named tribal leader, and according to his grandfather’s wishes, he is to marry Mumtaz. Matters take a turn for the worse when Jameel is almost killed by a thousand pound chandelier which inexplicably comes crashing to the ground. A mysterious hand, possibly his grandfather’s spirit, tugs him aside. The djinni of the house, which hitherto played only mischievous tricks, also helps the youngsters, warning them of subterfuge and danger. Angered by their family’s “control” over their lives, the two youngsters try to escape. Accompanied by Shabanu, they flee to Cholistan. But Nazir, the “sleeping tiger,” gets wind of their plan. In a final bid to take over the clan’s leadership, he and his men accost them at gunpoint. Omar arrives just in time to shoot Nazir. All’s well that ends well. Jameel and Mumtaz realize that they do care for each other. They will marry. He will finish school in Pakistan, and then study in Stanford, his grandfather’s alma mater. The trilogy concludes with Shabanu’s decision to return to Cholistan. This time it is to teach the women how to read.

*The House of Djinn* was written fifteen years after *Haveli* (1993). Unlike its prequels, this concluding book is prefaced with an author’s note that briefly explains the history of Pakistan, tribal leadership, and “traditionally” arranged marriages. Most notably, Staples takes on the dynamics between tradition and modernity. We are told that Mahsood,
who has succeeded his brother Rahim as the patriarch of the fictional Amirzai family is “very modern and forward-looking, as some (but not all) sardars are” (p. ix). Readers’ cultural assumptions are thereby unsettled. Generalizations are also discouraged.

Foreshadowing the story’s conclusion, Staples explains that despite the overriding sense of familial duty in arranged marriages, frequently “personal preferences” are taken into account, and the primary concern of parents is that their child is “happily married with a secure financial future” (p. ix). The author is at pains to emphasize that “The House of Djinn draws on tribal traditions to create a world that is typical of some families of Pakistani tribal leaders, and not at all typical of others.” It is this kind of willingness to challenge entrenched binaries and unexamined generalizations that can lead the reader to consider these societies through the lens of change. Writing at a time when Islam and Muslim culture is at the center of global conversations, Staples grapples with reconciling traditional gender relationships with the precepts of modernity, just as she claims that if Pakistan is to survive, Islam and modernization have to be compatible. Unfortunately, the reading guide (Appendix E) insists on comparisons of “Western mores and tribal traditions” with little consideration for how the author seeks a meeting ground.

**Reconciling tradition and modernity.**

The narration of the relationship between tradition and modernity can be oppositional, as in *Homeless Bird*, or the two notions can coexist side by side, conversing with each other, and struggling for some via media. This is what Sara Mills (1997) had in mind when she writes that a conferring of discourses may result in an apparent lack of cohesiveness, but is generally indicative of discontinuity and becomes marked in
discourses that are in the process of change (pp. 89-91). In the analysis of *The House of Djinn* (2008), I hone in on Staples’ reconciliation of tradition and modernity and then consider the narrative of nation building.

![The House of Djinn](image)

*Figure 5: The House of Djinn (2008)*

Compared to the other covers of Staples’ novels, here the frame has tightened, and the viewer is on level with the woman’s eye (see Figure 5). In terms of pictorial conventions, the close-up, the exclusion of context, the direct gaze, and the ‘face to face’ camera position all create a sense of physical proximity (Lister and Wells, 2001, p. 75). As a set of semiotic signs, the image beckons eye-contact and engagement. The contact, however, is interrupted by a fabric that is not quite a veil, but more of a trellised, architectural peep hole that demarcates an inside space of the private from the viewer’s public outside. In this respect, I am reminded of Judith Cross’ (2006) comment on the “confinement of women to the non-public realm under a burqa” (pp. 171-192). Alerted by this subtle change in the representation of head covers and the notion of inside/outside, I
wonder what cultural implications are embedded in the narration of inside and outside spaces.

In an attempt to reconcile tradition and modernity, Staples inverts the familiar cultural tropes associated with Muslim culture, most notably the *burqa* and the separation of males and females. In *The House of Djinn*, the *burqa*, which completely covers a woman’s body, becomes an instrument of freedom. After ten years of seclusion, Shabanu stealthily ventures outside, “looking at life” while she “hides within the billowing folds of a burqa” (p. 9). Later, Jameel and Mumtaz, escape by disguising themselves in *burqas*. Sartorial disguise is often the other way around. In the next book, *Rickshaw Girl*, the protagonist disguises herself as a boy in order get a job. Similar disguises appear in Deborah Ellis’ *Breadwinner Trilogy*. Staples’ inversion is significant, even though inserted in a cloak and dagger fashion.

Cross’ understanding of the burqa as a spatial separation of the private from the public realm, is corroborated in the practice of *purdah*, or the architectural separation of the women’s quarters from the male’s. By the end of the novel, Mumtaz and Jameel are happy to be married. No longer does Jameel feel stuck between “the now of California and the ancient ways of thinking that was Pakistan” (p. 6). No longer does he view Pakistani culture as an ethnographic present “stuck in a time warp” (p. 122) of “medieval times” (p. 197). As per tradition, Mumtaz is now in the women’s quarters. Jameel is eager to see her, but is aware that traditions cannot be changed overnight, and wonders: “perhaps he could learn to see purdah – women being kept separate from men – as just a formality, a reminder of the good things of the past, when it served to protect privacy and
dignity. In California he’d always felt uncomfortable with the exposed navels and more. Was purdah so bad by comparison?” (p. 194). Jameel has come a long way from his initial judgments. And so has Staples. In The House of Djinn, the author suggests that modernization need not mean relinquishing Muslim cultural practices.

Jameel’s comment is noteworthy for three reasons: the inclusion of historicized social background (even though superficial), the juxtaposition of America/Pakistan “perspective consciousness,” and a discursive tension between gender issues and the notion of a developed nation. Voicing the opinion of many third world feminists, Uma Narayan, in her book Dislocating Cultures: Identities, Traditions, and Third World Feminism, (1997) solicits “Western feminist scholars” engaged in analysis of “Third-World women’s problems” to be aware of the historical background of cultural practices (p. 55). Staples makes attempts in this direction.

So far, I have examined how Staples bridges tradition and modernity. The problem is that in spite of the need to be sensitive to other cultural perspectives, any semblance of gender differentials is at odds with the pedagogical goals of literature, and the attributes of a modern nation. Gender appears in the guidelines of the Jane Addams award, which requires that the selected book also addresses the question, “Does the book promote an understanding of the role of women in society, gender roles, the need to overcome gender stereotypes, e.g. role models of both genders?” (JAPA). Gender equality also figures prominently in the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), commonly accepted as the scoring guide for measuring a country’s development. My attention now
turns to the narration of a nation’s change. Problems arise when a change in inequitable gender relationships can be exclusively traced to an American influence.

By the end of the novel, it becomes increasingly clear that the author has been raising questions about how to “honor Islam and . . . make Pakistan a more modern country” (p. 202). With the announcement that Jameel will be the next leader of tribal lands extending from Punjab to Baluchistan, the novel weaves together the strands of gender-tradition-modernity into a discourse on governance and nation building. When Shabanu asks why Jameel was chosen as the next leader, Omar replies, “We need someone who can change the way people think . . . His view of honor is Pakistani, but his sense of justice is American. He sees everyone’s life to be of equal value to his. I hope the time is right to introduce that way of thinking here, and that he will be good for all of us” (p. 142). For Staples, America is epitomized in a type of governance that ensures justice, and equality in gender and social relationships. It is a model of achieved development and modernity. In contrast, Pakistan is a nation in flux and it is up to the next generation to herald its transition. Staples proposes education, particularly American education, as a possible path towards change. Omar explains to Mumtaz and Jameel, “Things must change if Pakistan is to survive. You must be educated and wise” (p. 192). It is significant that Jameel will study at Stanford. As for Mumtaz, “The experience of living in America will be good for her” (p. 201). Though Staples remains keenly aware that Pakistan’s transition to modernity need not mean forsaking Islam, change happens via a wealthy, political elite who is educated in America.
In his influential essay, “DissemiNation,” Homi Bhabha asks, “How does one write the nation’s modernity as the event of the everyday and the advent of the epochal?” (p. 293). According to Bhabha, nations and their claim to progress and modernity are narrative constructions and the nation comes into being as “a system of cultural signification, as the representation of social life” (Bhabha, 1990, p. 3). In Staples’ trilogy, Pakistan will become a ‘modern’ nation through an American educated leadership that deftly reconciles the cultural significance of tradition with a modern social life.

In the next chapter book, Mitali Perkins’ *Rickshaw Girl*, changes in cultural practices and gender roles are entirely endogenous. And while Staples was primarily concerned with the political leadership of an upper middle class, Perkins addresses the important relationship between poverty and gender roles which inheres in any discourse on development. When offset with the previous books, *Rickshaw Girl* and its teaching guide provide a refreshing departure from a binary and hierarchical discourse that contrasts Third World socio-cultural practices with America and that narrates modernization as solely emanating from Western influences.


Mitali Perkins was born in Kolkata, a city in Eastern India, near Bangladesh. She has written several books on the immigrant experience of South Asian young adults. *The Not-So-Star Spangled Life of Sunita Sen* (2005) and *Monsoon Summer* (2004) and *Secret Keeper* (2009), all deal with an adolescent Indian-American girl who has to come to terms with her cultural heritage. Perkins takes on politics in *First Daughter: Extreme American*

In Rickshaw Girl, Naima is a talented young painter of the traditional alpana patterns Bangladeshi women paint on their houses. When she realizes that being a girl, she cannot help her father pay off the money he had borrowed to buy his cycle rickshaw, Naima is not satisfied with just painting alpanas. She wants to help earn money for her family, like her best friend, Saleem, does for his. Her rash effort to drive her father’s rickshaw ends up in an accident, plunging her family deeper into debt. This time, her great-grandmother’s gold bangle will have to be pawned. Indomitable and ever resourceful, she draws on her artistic talents to save the day. Disguised as a boy, she goes to a repair shop and offers her services, painting decorations on the rickshaws. She is surprised to find that the owner is a woman. The business was financed by a microfinance system for women. When Naima reveals herself, she is hired on the condition that her father will bring her to the shop for training. With a day’s work, she has paid off the repairs to her father’s rickshaw. The book includes an informative glossary of Bangla words, and a valuable author's note that explains the process of microfinance. This visual analysis is limited to illustrator Jamie Hogan’s book’s cover, though the text has many black and white line drawings. The discussion guide was developed by the publisher (Charlesbridge) and the author (Appendix F).
The bigger, dynamic picture.

To some extent the cover image of *Rickshaw Girl* is similar to the other books discussed. There is, of course, the covered head, or, as in *Homeless Bird*, the depiction of a girl who is actively engaged in pursuing her talent. But the major difference lies in the focus of the composition, its framing, and contextualization. Unlike *Homeless Bird*, here the focus is not on the centered and full frontal gaze of the girl, but on her hand and the action of painting. In visual semiotic terms, the hand is a ‘vector’ that guides the viewer’s attention to the title. There is also a narrative element to the image; to the left there is a man peddling his rickshaw across a lush, verdant landscape. The deep green wraps around the back. Though there may have been little contact between the author and the artist, the expanse of green echoes the author’s note. Perkins reminds us of the “emerald rice paddies” and the artistic expressions of *alpana* painting and rickshaw art.

According to Kress and van Leeuwen (1996), visual representations can either be conceptual or narrative. Conceptual patterns do not represent participants as doing
something, but as being or meaning something, or having the characteristics of some category. This would be the case of Staples’ cover images. Instead, narrative representations relate participants in terms of actions, “transitory spatial arrangements or processes of change” (p. 79). Narrative representations can either relate participants to each other, or relate participants in terms of a part-whole structure. The cover of *Rickshaw Girl* is of the latter category. Jewitt and Oyama (2001) state that the choice of conceptual or narrative representation “provides a key to understanding the discourses which mediate their representation” (p. 141). With this visual lead, it is pertinent to ask what discourses mediate a preference for context and action, rather than focusing on the individual. The question gains importance if one recognizes that an image not only represents the world, but also plays a part in how we interact with the world (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996).

**Grassroots empowerment.**

*Rickshaw Girl* is about rural development through micro credit loans. Microfinancing, which alleviates poverty through participatory credit and cooperative organizations in rural areas, was the brainchild of Dr. Muhammad Yunus. In 1976, he founded the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh. Since then, it has provided credit to women entrepreneurs. As Perkins explains in her author’s note, “Studies show that, in general, women are better than men at investing a loan in a way that benefits the whole family. That’s why microfinance with a focus on women is a powerful weapon in the war against poverty” (p. 88). Other children’s books have been written on this revolutionary concept. *A Basket Full of Bangles: How a Business Grows* (2002) by Ginger Howard, is also based in Bangladesh. *Beatrice’s Goat*, by Page McBrier (2000) is on Project Heifer International’s
work in Central Africa. *One Hen: How One Small Loan Made a Big Difference* (2008) is the true story of a Ghanaian poultry farmer. Since its publication in 2008, *One Hen* has evolved from a children’s picture book to an organization which provides enrichment curriculum that teaches elementary school children about world issues and how they can make a difference.

Of all the books surveyed, *Rickshaw Girl* is most explicitly about rural socio-economic development for the poor. In an interview, Perkins remarks, “I've always longed to help the poor and the displaced, and to inspire others to do the same - that's why I studied political science. You'll find "development" themes interwoven into many of my stories. . . . My forthcoming book, *Rickshaw Girl*, explores that theme a bit further. It's based in rural Bangladesh, where small-scale enterprise and access to credit are empowering illiterate women in a revolutionary way” (Atkins). Microfinancing of women’s rural projects is central to *Rickshaw Girl*. It is explained in the author’s note, and the discussion guide has a link to www.nobelprize.org, where readers can learn more about Dr. Muhammad Yunus and the Grameen bank, the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize winners.

*Rickshaw Girl* brings together various elements of the ‘discourse of development.’ As in the other books surveyed in this chapter, connections are drawn between social and economic development, female empowerment, education, economic opportunities, and the nation. Here too, the protagonist is a young girl, who combats cultural constraints. In the beginning Naima complains, “*If only I HAD been born a boy . . . Then I could earn some money*” (p. 21). Disguised as a boy, she enjoys the “freedom from curious eyes”, and
realizes “How easy it (was) to be a boy” (p. 57). And by the end of the book, she declares “It’s a good thing I turned out to be a girl” (p. 77). From the point of view of a semiotic study of typography, italics are a signing mode that can supplement the text with orientation and identity (van Leeuwen, 2005). Perkins’ use of italics draws the reader to the connection between gender roles and employment, while giving voice to Naima.

Perkins also uses italics to emphasize education. When Naima’s younger sister comments that she likes playing with everyone in school, “Girls and boys,” Naima thinks, “You’ll probably stop going to school anyway” (p. 11). There is a major difference in the way gender issues are portrayed. Whereas in Staples’ and Whelan’s novels, girls are not educated because of cultural constraints, here it is primarily a matter of poverty. Naima knows that her parents cannot afford to pay the school fees for both daughters. Without discounting that under such circumstances a girl is less likely to be educated, Perkins’ adds complexity to a gendered discourse on development by taking into account financial limitations.

Lastly, Perkins differs in the way she portrays change. There is a marked absence of differences between South Asian and Western cultural practices. Nor, as in the case of Homeless Bird, is the cultural tradition of religious belief blamed for female disempowerment. Going beyond such binaries and facile reductions, change comes from within the culture and society; women’s grassroots organizations successfully combat poverty and dependence. The owner of the repair shop, who is a widow, tells Naima, “Things are changing whether people around here like it or not. These days a woman who wants to start her own business can borrow money from a woman’s bank. We decided to
put our money together and help each other” (p. 64). For Perkins, cultural change comes about through changes in the economic system. She favors a grassroots economic empowerment, rather than Whelan’s benevolent philanthropist, or Staples’ reliance on a wealthy family. It is the only book in this chapter’s selection that clearly tackles the dilemma of modernizing the Third World, while not undermining its autonomy.

In sharp contrast to Staples’ and Whelan, Perkins gives evidence of a dynamic society that is already undergoing change. Naima sees a woman “doctor” on a TV screen, and knows of a shoe stand “owned” by a woman. She wonders, “If those women can do it, why can’t I?” (p. 23). The emphasis on social change is picked up in the discussion guide that is co-authored with Perkins (Appendix F). Students are prompted to consider the transformation of all societies: “Societies change from generation to generation. How is Naima’s life different from her mother’s? What might be causing those changes? Ask students to list some differences between their lives and their parents’ lives. What is causing those changes?” Framed in this manner, readers are encouraged to view social transformation as common to all cultures, and are discouraged from viewing Bangladeshi society as fossilized in “the traditions of an ancient past,” as Haveli’s jacket proclaims.

As noted, the discourse on development is implicated with a certain way of representing a nation. Bangladesh is not absent in this slim chapter book. The national anthem blares from a radio. And the “leaders” acknowledge talent “on International Mother Language Day, when the whole country celebrated the beauty of their Bangla language,” and they “gave a prize to the girl who painted the best alpana” (p. 8). It is not surprising that in the author’s note, Perkins is eager to counter common stereotypes of Bangladesh as
a “desperately poor, densely populated” country. She not only reminds the reader of the country’s rich cultural heritage, but that “You’ll see lives beginning to change, and families coming out of poverty for the first time in ages” (p. 87). It is a message of hope that narrates the nation within a context of social and economic transformation, rather than the isolated achievement of a single individual. It is not, as the jacket of *Homeless Bird* announces, “one girl’s struggle to find her place” in a culture. For Perkins, narrating the Third World is about celebration, critique, and collective change.

**Conclusion**

This chapter began with Meena Khorana’s 1989 comment that children’s literature on India “gives western children the limited message that India has to get past its traditions in order to achieve technological advancement” (1989, p. 201). Twenty years later, it is time to reassess Khorana’s observation. Reevaluating Khorana’s comment entails responding to the question, “Through what processes is cultural change narrated in these books?” In the 21st. century, when much of the region is undergoing accelerated economic and social transformation, with countries like India at the forefront of software technology, the parameters of development discourse has had to shift in order to accommodate changing realities. Even in this small selection of five books, societal achievement of modernity is evaluated in terms of gender empowerment. All the protagonists are female adolescents who do not have access to an education, or employment opportunities. The narratives all indicate that once these conditions are met, these girls exercise the founding principle of modernity: freedom of choice.
While the gendered discourse of development prevails, authors differ on the kind of relationship construed between tradition, development, and modernity. In other words, “Does development entail an opposition between tradition and modernity?” Three approaches can be identified: a binary opposition of tradition and modernity, with an emphasis on tradition as an impediment (Gloria Whelan), efforts intended to reconcile tradition and modernity, while always moving toward the latter (Staples), and a focus on undergoing socio-economic development (Perkins). It is evident that when narrating South Asian cultures, social development and processes of modernization, authors are narrating the nation. In *Rickshaw Girl*, Bangladesh is a nation where women’s roles are already changing. In Staples’ trilogy, American influence and American education of politically powerful families is seen as an avenue for Pakistan’s modernization. American readers are thereby assured of the validity of their own culture and nation. In a post 9/11 world, connections are inadvertently drawn between Pakistan and American presence there today. Van Dijk (1998) would suggest that the narrative stabilizes a “system of ideas” that controls how we make sense of other societies. Yet, if the reader asks, “Does the book tackle the dilemma of modernizing the Third World, without undermining its autonomy?” then it is clear that Staples is acutely aware of the problem that presents itself when American influence modernizes a country, and makes serious attempts to build bridges between Muslim culture and modernity, America and Pakistan.

Literature and authorial intention cannot be divorced from the way these books are marketed and promoted as curriculum enhancers. Authors often weave a much more complex picture of societal change than what students are led to surmise from the text.
Even when an author like Staples sought bridges between tradition and modernity, publishers’ hooks on covers, and questions in teaching guides insisted on compare/contrast grids that over emphasize cultural constraints, minimizing textual and references to poverty, availability of schools, rural development, or access to health care. The failure of teaching guides to appreciate the text’s complexities locks the narrative in a dichotomous opposition that celebrates the aesthetic sensibilities of South Asian cultures, while bemoaning its cultural practices. Additionally, there are serious limitations to the inductive reasoning that connects the text to the world. Teaching guides encourage readers to extrapolate about a country/culture on the basis of one text. In itself, this is not troublesome, since much of what these authors narrate does in fact take place. The problem is that a single book becomes representative of a complex, dynamic, and heterogeneous context, rather than evidence of a certain perspective, and a specific slice of life.

The institutionalization of literature is crystallized in the visual imagery of book covers that are designed to capture a potential reader. Responding to and perpetuating an Orientalist representation, the covers glorify the exotic Eastern woman draped in a head cover, while catchy marketing phrases applaud the protagonist’s struggle with tradition. Cover images of these books also reflect an underlying difference between individualism and context. Except for Perkins, all the book covers display a girl, who captures the attention of the reader/consumer, rather than being active in her own context. I propose that the excessive weight given to individuals as actors of change has wider implications since it misleads readers to regard communities and families as passive rather than active catalysts of transformation. Staples and Whelan reflect modernity’s liberal humanist leanings that
emphasize the agency of the exceptional individual. These protagonists are not represented as part of a bigger, dynamic picture of economic and socio-cultural change. In contrast, Perkins favors a more collaborative, social process, as exemplified by Naima’s resourcefulness and her membership in a dynamic community.

The last two decades have witnessed a convergence of development theories and human rights. The previous emphasis on economic indicators of development was replaced by the United Nations’ Human Development Indices (HDI) that measure a country’s development according to accessibility to health care, education, poverty levels, economic and political participation, and gender empowerment. Since 1990, a nation’s development is gauged by individual citizens’ ability to choose and exercise their rights. The following chapter analyzes how picture books, chapter books and novels that address the problem of child labor and children who have to work to support their family, reflect HDI’s connections between poverty, human rights, gender, health, education, and political participation.
CHAPTER 5: HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE CHILD

The language of human rights is the ethical lingua franca of our times. Development - as a goal and process - remains the path which unites human rights’ goals and global education. Viewing development through the lens of human rights means identifying people whose rights and entitlements have been violated. The Millennium Development Goals (MDG) signed by 189 world leaders in September 2000, signaled the priority accorded to reducing extreme poverty and achieving human development and human rights.

According to the United Nations Children’s Education Fund, millions of children work to help their families in ways that are neither harmful, nor exploitative. But one in six children who are 5 to 14 years old, i.e. about 16% of all children in this age group are involved in child labor in developing countries (UNICEF, 2006). The International Labor Organization (ILO) Conventions 138 (1973) and 182 (1999) define child laborers as,

… all children younger than 12 working in any economic activities, children 12–14 years old engaged in more than light work, and all children engaged in the worst forms of child labour – in which they are enslaved, forcibly recruited, prostituted, trafficked, forced into illegal activities or exposed to hazards.
(UNICEF, 2006)

This chapter’s analysis of five books illustrates the interplay of development and violation of human rights, and provides interesting comparisons of the varying contexts of child labor and children who work to help their families. Beneath my Mother’s Feet (2008) is about the human rights abuse of household servants. The chapter book Iqbal
Lakshmanan, Subi, 2010, UMSL, p. 152


These books are a very valuable asset in teaching the goals of multicultural and global education: an awareness of race-class-gender inequities and encouraging an active engagement in countering such injustices around the world (Baker, 1999; Glasgow and Rice, 2007; Gaudelli, 2003; Hill, 2007; Marian J. McKenna, 2007; Merryfield, 1996; Nieto 2002; Pinsent, 1997; Rogers, 1999; Yokota and Kolar, 2008). These goals are derived from a shared assumption that students need to become responsible global citizens who can participate in human rights activism. In fact, human rights education is an important part of global education and the notion of global citizenship (Banks, et al, 2005; Diaz et al, 1999; Schattle, 2008). It is not my intention to undermine this enterprise, nor do I wish to question the tenets of human rights. I simply seek to bring a critical global perspective to the universal assumptions of human rights. To this end, I operationalize Foucault’s critical approach which demands that “everything in our knowledge which is suggested to us as being universally valid must be tested and analyzed” (1998, p. 461).
Taking heed of Foucault’s critical mode of analysis that attends to the conditions of a discourse, this chapter begins with an overview of human rights. This historical and theoretical backdrop leads to a critical awareness of opposing views on issues such as the relationship between human rights and cultural rights, and the potential politicization of human rights activism. Acknowledging these long-standing debates provide the necessary guideposts to reading these books (and others dealing with child labor in developing countries) through a critical global perspective that takes into account Robert Hanvey’s (1976) paradigm for global education: perspective-consciousness, an awareness of prevailing world conditions, and knowledge of prevailing theories and concepts of global change. It cannot be overstated that when readers are made aware of the problems that arise when human rights violations are ascribed to culture, or when the narration of change could bear a political subtext that favors the West, a critical reading of transcultural literature can indeed be a springboard for thoughtful global activism.

**Human Rights: An Overview**

The birth of ‘modernity’ and contemporary theory and praxis of human rights are commonly traced to the 18th century European Enlightenment, though there is a long tradition of human rights in the non-Western ancient world. Politically and philosophically, the Enlightenment sought to ensure a right to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” The realization of happiness for all humans was expressed by a language of universal, equal, and inalienable rights, which gave the individual a political, civil and existential sense of self-determination. The Enlightenment’s major transformative historical events, i.e. the American and French revolutions of the 18th
century, produced two major philosophical and legal documents: The American Declaration of Independence (1776) and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen in 1789 (Hunt, 2007). The gap between vision and reality came to fore in political and economic activities, such as colonialism and slavery, which were antithetical to these transformative documents. Postcolonial critics observe that this contradiction was rationalized by portraying colonialism and empire-building as a morally justified “civilizing mission” intended to bring to the native the enlightened principles of progress and social reform. This uncomfortable dissonance between declarations of the freedom and equality of all human beings and reality on the ground, later cautioned post-colonial countries to question the sincerity of humanitarian endeavors. For instance, post World War II humanitarian development programs, as instituted by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, also came under similar scrutiny for covert economic and political goals.

In the 20th century, human rights, as expressed in The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR, 1948), was propelled by the Holocaust and the horrific recognition of humanity’s capability to pursue “barbaric acts.” Though the 1948 declaration emphasized the need to prevent world wars and ensure international security, it marked a turning point in the enunciation of the civil, legal, and political rights of all human beings. The UNDHR specifically includes all human beings regardless of “race, color, sex, language, religion and politics.” Its scope extends the notion of unalienable rights to the civil domains of education, health, work, “rest and leisure,” and participation in the cultural life of the community. The norms of universal human rights continually
expanded during the post war years. The Declaration of the Rights of the Child, adopted in 1959, affirmed ten basic principles that gave special protection to the child. Thirty years later, in 1989, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) comprised of 54 articles that included the social, cultural, economic, civil and political rights of the child. Article 32 states:

States Parties recognize the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child’s education, or to be harmful to the child’s health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development. (Committee of the Rights of the Child, 1989, p.9)

All the books in this chapter address article 32 on the human rights of a child. In Patricia McCormick’s *Sold*, child labor intersects with the heightened vulnerability of girls. Gender issues were advocated in the Convention on the Political Rights of Women (1959), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1981), and the 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, which recognized that physical, sexual and psychological violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women (Brownlie and Goodwin-Gill, 2002).

*Is there a political subtext in the narration of change?*

Notwithstanding the unassailable recognition of the *intention* of human rights declarations, its interpretation and enactment has met with criticism. The debates that surround the universalism of human rights offer a means to identify excluded discourses and problematize otherwise opaque assumptions. For instance, criticism of the
universalism of human rights may be a matter of perceived economic and power asymmetries. Critics observe that the globalization of human rights is complicit with economic and political power that colludes with the expansion of global capitalism, reinforcing a view of individual entitlement, but undervaluing the importance of economic equality (Gibney, 2003). From the political standpoint, Third World and developing countries contend that the alliance between Western foreign policy and the rhetoric of human rights continues a colonial legacy of economic and military intervention. From such a perspective, global philanthropy will always be scrutinized for a covert political end. These critics point out that “rights-talk” has, at times, served to privilege Western political and economic priorities over universal ethics (Chomsky, 2003). Acknowledging these interpretations requires the reader to be aware of political subtexts in the narration of change.

**How does the story depict the relationship between civil, political, social, economic, and cultural rights?**

The universal, ethical and normative frameworks of these declarations have also been critiqued for their unexamined conflation of context. Customarily, human rights discourse is divided into “three generations” of rights: (1) civil and political, (2) social and economic, and (3) cultural and collective rights. Although these categories of rights are interdependent and shape social development and transformation, emphasis on one aspect over others results in lack of attention to context. For example, at a pragmatic level, some nations argue that the right to property, education, and health, need to be addressed differently than the rights to political or religious freedoms. Fred Dallmayr (2001) proposes
that these three generations should be considered as separate “concept clusters,” and although they partially overlap, they “are embroiled in critical dialogue and mutual contestation” (p. 63). Acknowledging these differing interpretations is very important in understanding how, for example, a text emphasizes the cultural, but minimizes the economic context. Thus, a reader’s ability to question how stories depict the relationship between civil, political, social, economic, and cultural rights is integral to fostering a balanced appreciation of the narration of developing societies.

**Are human rights violations ascribed to culture?**

Although it is much easier to claim that the cultural politics of human rights can be understood in terms of the tension within the globalization of Western modernity (de Sousa Santos, 2002), this is a facile juxtaposition of tradition and modernity. On the contrary, Amartya Sen reminds us that the conscious pursuit of universal equality and tolerance is part of every culture. In his article *Human Rights and Asian Values* (1997), he points to the Buddhist tradition of volition and free choice, the religious tolerance of Sufism, and the pluralistic mode of governance of King Ashoka and King Akbar, as religious, cultural and political examples of human rights in South Asian history. Sen’s delinking of human rights violations from monolithic perceptions of culture requires that global educators and students be cautious of books and teaching guides that ascribe human rights violations to culture. Hence the need to ask, *are human rights violations ascribed to culture?*
How do authors resolve the tension between individualized self-actualization and familial/communal ties?

An important entry point into a critical dialogue on cultural rights is to address whether a Western worldview privileges the rights of the individual without adequately acknowledging cultures and societies wherein survival revolves around communal and familial obligations. For example, arranged marriages are bound by familial networks rather than individual choice. In order to identify inscribed cultural rights, readers are encouraged to identify the tension between individualized self-actualization and familial/communal ties. When this question is applied to a comparison of adolescent literature and picture books, it opens up connections between literary genre, concepts of childhood and adolescence, and the narration of human rights.

Human Rights Education and Literature

A global approach to human rights education was first made explicit in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), which includes the following passage:

Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace. (UDHR, Par. 2, Article 26)

Recognizing the importance of the school in fostering international understanding of these challenges, UNESCO published a booklet entitled Education for International Understanding: Examples and Suggestions for Classroom Use (1959), with an emphasis on teaching about the United Nations and human rights. UNESCO’s 1974 “Recommendation on Education for International Understanding, Cooperation and Peace
and Education Relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms,” advocated an “interdisciplinary, problem-oriented content adapted to the complexity of the issues involved in the application of human rights and in international cooperation” (UNESCO, 1974).

Educators have closely followed the need for human rights education. With the rise of multiculturalism and identity politics in the 1980s, James Lynch (1989) insisted that the very kernel of a global multicultural curriculum should be human rights and responsibilities, as embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. According to Lynch, only human rights can provide the moral framework and international yardstick on which the ‘balancing act’ of commonality and diversity find their equilibrium. Human rights education is an inherent part of global education. In their guidelines for global studies education, Collins, Czarra and Smith (1998) identify ten categories of global issues and problems as the basis for teaching and learning about the world in K-12 schools. This includes “Human Rights and Social Justice/Human Needs and Quality of Life” (p. 230).

The interface of human rights education and literature is a long-standing tradition. In the U.S., Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852) influenced public opinion on slavery (Sundquist, 1993), while in India, Mulk Raj Anand’s *The Untouchables* (1940) exposed the caste system. From a literary point of view, it is useful to keep in mind Joseph Slaughter’s (2007) comment on the confluence between the literary convention of the *Bildungsroman*, (the reaching of adulthood novel) and human rights laws. Applying Michel Foucault’s thesis of “discursive regimes,” he argues that
human rights law and the *Bildungsroman* constitute and regulate the modern individual subject and social formations (2007, p. 8). Both deal with the movement from being ‘subjected’ to becoming a self-defined subject, both problematize the relationship between the individual and society, both posit the individual as driven to seek to “its freest and fullest form of expression in publicness, in the figure of the social human being” (p. 20), and both share the common process and goal of human development based on freedom and choice. Slaughter’s observation on the relationship between the *Bildungsroman* as a novel form and human rights, can be applied to young adult fiction for adolescents. From this perspective, these coming-of-age stories can be read as the protagonist’s dawning awareness of familial, cultural and socio-economic power relations that constrain self-identity and realization.

**Reading about Human Rights with a Critical Lens**

The next section demonstrates how a critical global perspective can be adopted even when reading transcultural literature on human rights aberrations or violations. The four lead questions that emerged from the overview of human rights are applied. These are:

- Is there a political subtext in the narration of change?
- How does the story depict the relationship between civil, political, social, economic, and cultural rights?
- Are human rights violations ascribed to culture?
- How do authors resolve the tension between individualized self-actualization and familial/communal ties?
When combined with the six questions for a discourse analysis of a specific text or visual, these questions provide a framework for a critical global perspective on books dealing with human rights violations abroad. The section begins with Patricia McCormick’s *Sold* (2006), since in many ways it includes the concerns of the previous chapter, viz. culture and gender exploitation. This book raises questions about the *political subtext in the narration of change* and ascribing *human rights violations to culture*. Amjed Qamar’s *Beneath my Mother’s Feet* (2008), Francesco D’Adamo’s *Iqbal* (2003) and Pegi Deitz Shea’s picture book *The Carpet Boy’s Gift* (2008) all deal with *the relationship between civil, political, social, economic, and cultural rights*. In picture books for younger readers, the most pertinent question is *how do authors resolve the tension between individualized self-actualization and familial/communal ties?* Reading these narratives through a critical global perspective brings forth a nuanced political and religious discourse that would otherwise be indiscernible to readers.

*Sold* (2006): “Simply to endure . . . is to triumph.”

Sold is written in the first-person voice of 13-year-old Lakshmi, whose story unfolds in a series of crisply edited vignettes of free verse. The daughter of a desperately poor Nepali family, she is sold into prostitution by her step-father. Convinced that she is going to work in the city as a maid, Lakshmi dreams that thanks to her efforts, her mother will finally have a tin roof, and enough money for food. But the reader knows that her stepfather will gamble away the money at the tea-shop, or buy another useless contraption, like the defunct motorcycle he had bought when her mother pawned her earrings. Sold for 800 rupees, Lakshmi is accompanied by “aunts” and “uncle-husbands” across the Indo-Nepali border, and into the teeming heartland of India “where the lying-down people look like the dead. And the standing-up ones, like the walking dead.” The adolescent is finally re-sold, at a tremendous profit, to “Happiness House,” a brothel in Calcutta’s red-light district. Lakshmi is then locked in a room. Her hair is shorn. She is beaten and starved, but she will not give in. A vignette titled “After five days,” has only one line: “After five days of no food and water I don’t even dream.” Finally, a drugged glass of buttermilk does what hunger and confinement could not, and her first customer “rolls off” her. Drugged for several days, imprisoned in the room, men come and go. Even so, Lakshmi’s spirit is not entirely broken. In “Happiness House” she also discovers friendship in eight year old Harish, the awe of watching The Bold and the Beautiful, the sparkle of Coca-Cola, and the liberating joy of a yellow pencil. Ultimately, she is rescued by an American.

In this analysis, the discourse of the cover image is juxtaposed with a close narrative and linguistic analysis of the text and the discussion guide (Appendix G), in
order to identify a discourse that associates South Asian culture with the disenfranchised female, her exploitation, and liberation. The focus on language use is prompted by the book’s free verse style, and the author’s deliberate patterning of language.\footnote{Sections of this analysis will appear in Lakshmanan, M. S. (2011). A critical discourse analysis of neocolonialism in Patricia McCormick’s “Sold.” In R. Rogers (Ed.), \textit{An introduction to critical discourse analysis in education.} New York: Routledge (to be published).}

\textbf{Demanding empathetic engagement.}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.3\textwidth]{sold_cover.jpg}
\caption{Sold (2006)}
\end{figure}

Clearly the focus of this book cover is the photograph of the girl. There are three participants in the communicative interaction ensuing from the photograph: the photographer, the subject of the photograph, and the onlooker (Rose, 2001, p. 188).
Social semiotic analysis looks at how pictorial structures of design - layout, color, text, typography, *provenance*, perspective, medium, and mode - produce human subjects (the photographed) and their social relations with the onlooker, within a network of power relations (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996; 2001). Kress and van Leeuwen remind us that these elements of design are expressions of a discourse that is “bound up with the social institutions within which the pictures are produced, circulated and read. They are ideological” (1996, p. 45). Keeping in mind that discourse constructs subjects and social practices, this section analyzes how the photograph and text generate a discourse on the South Asian subaltern, produces effects of truth, and conveys a power relationship between the image/text and the viewer/reader.

As a sign system, photographs are seen as evidence of truth, of “what was really there” (Rose, 2001, p. 138). In the previous chapter, I suggested that the photographs on Staples’ covers elide differences between fiction and reality, and fall into a genealogy of “selective traditions” when representing the exotic Eastern woman. Here, the girl’s covered head and mouth is part of an archive of representations of the repressed Oriental woman (Bradford, 2007). What else does this photograph signify? The retro black and white photograph activates allusions to the old, not contemporary, and hence not modern. At the second stage of what Barthes (1972) referred to as a ‘mythical’ metalanguage, the girl’s embodied modes of gesture and gaze allude to being muffled. Hence, the *provenance* of clothing and an embodied gesture have become the vocabulary for a discourse on repressive cultural practices and female disenfranchisement (Said, 1979). In
In the following textual analysis I elaborate on how the shawl becomes a cultural signifier of oppression.

The photograph also activates certain kinds of social relationships between the viewer and the viewed. The girl’s gaze is strongly experiential, evoking empathy, engagement, or at the very least, a voyeuristic curiosity. It is not the dreamy long-distance gaze of reverie. It is a middle-distance “out of the frame” gaze that verges on the stare. She is not looking at the future, but at us, engaging the onlooker in a relationship. Her gaze seems to speak, in lieu of the covered mouth. Much has been written about the gaze. According to Kress & van Leeuwen (1996) the gaze is more interactional than representational (p. 90). They distinguish between offer and demand in a gaze. An indirect address would represent an offer, whereas a direct address represents a demand for the viewer to enter into a relationship with the person (1996, p.126-127). Other studies consider the frontal or oblique direction of the gaze from behind the camera. John Tagg (1988, p.189) argues that frontality is a technique of documentation. Reminiscent of the ethnographer’s lens, it offers up what is represented for evaluation. Tagg describes how historically, the frontal portrait is a “code for social inferiority” (p.37). If the selection of the photograph is conceptualized on these terms, then the image on the cover goes beyond its exteriority, and enters a discourse on how identities are construed within certain practices of social relationships.

At first glance, the cover has only a narrative function. It speaks about a young girl who has been sold. But, when the discourse of visual sign systems is dismantled, the construct of the ‘third world’ woman’s identity becomes evident. She is the not so
modern, voiceless subaltern, who *demands* (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996) a relationship of engagement and *evaluation* (Tagg, 1988). Power is exercised in the viewer’s response as an “evaluator.”

What connections can be drawn between the image and the text? Kress and van Leeuwen observe that “language and visual communication can in many cases express the same kind of relations, albeit in many different ways” (1996, p.211). Both the image and the novel’s use of first-person and present tense provokes the reader’s identification and involvement in a contemporaneous reality, suggesting affective and participatory ways of knowing, understanding, and interacting with the world (van Dijk, 1995). This propensity towards affective empathy is reflected in publisher Hyperion’s discussion guide question: “What was the most disturbing part of this story for you? What facts crawled under your skin and continue to haunt you? Do you think there is anything you can do to help? What?” (Appendix G). Emotive empathy with the protagonist motivates understanding and action, just like the photograph compels an interpersonal engagement. The question remains: What counts for knowledge and “facts” in the novel?

In order to make explicit the discursive formation of visual and language communication, I investigate the relationship between the cover image, vignettes that resound with the cover image, and discussion guides. The close linguistic reading of the text is based on Robert Hodge’s (1990) comment in *Literature as Discourse* that form is content, and that the notion of literature as discourse explores the connections between style and social meanings (1990, p. 78).
How does awareness of rights and self-identity come about?
The novel opens with the end of childhood innocence and the beginning of gendered adolescence marked by “first blood.” Now a woman, her mother schools her in “EVERYTHING I NEED TO KNOW” (pp. 15-16):

*Before* [italics added] today, Ama says, you could run as free as a leaf in the wind.

*Now* [italics added], she says, you must carry yourself with modesty, bow your head in the presence of men, and cover yourself with your shawl. (p. 15)

Recalling the shawl-covered girl on the photograph, her look of *demand or evaluation* is now changed to a downcast gaze of submission. The axis of time (before, now, never) is accompanied by varying degrees of modal verbs. *Before* she “could,” *now* she “must,” and the future is locked in the assertion of an unconditional “never.” In this how-to-behave list of rules, Lakshmi must,

*Never* [italics added] look a man in the eye.

Never allow yourself to be alone with a man who is not family.

And never look at growing pumpkins or cucumbers when you are bleeding.

Otherwise they will rot. (p. 15)

When schooling her in the role of a wife, the mother’s socio-cultural rule-book adopts a conditional if/then sequence, in which every activity is conditioned by the male. In this case, the reader knows that the antecedent (if) is not hypothetical, nor is the consequence (then) contingent on a previous event. Instead, the conditional clause alludes to a given causality of circumstantial context.

If he burps at the end of the meal, it is a sign that you have pleased him.

If he turns to you in the night, you must give yourself up to him, in the hopes that you will bear him a son. (p. 15)
After a series of instructions on breastfeeding a son as against a daughter, the vignette concludes with Lakshmi asking her mother,

“Why,” I say, “must women suffer so?”
“This has always been our fate,” she says.
“Simply to endure,” she says, “is to triumph.” (p. 16)

Like the photograph on the cover, the use of the present tense is anchored in the “here” and “now” and the reader/viewer becomes a participant in the protagonist’s experience (Traugott & Pratt, 1980). In fact, just as Lakshmi asked, “Why must women suffer so?” the text demands the reader’s engagement and evaluation of these codes of behavior. The mother’s reply becomes emblematic of the book’s representation of culturally determined female suffering. “Simply to endure is to triumph” appears (italicized) on the inner jacket of the book, evoking the stereotypical notions of Hindu passivity, determinism and fatalism. Temporality (before-now-always) and conditional causality (if-then) are imprisoned in a socio-cultural system that obliterates the experiential difference between passivity (“to endure”) and agency (“to triumph”). Lakshmi’s transition from a child to adolescent is abruptly ended with her sale to a woman recruiter for brothels. After being drugged and beaten into submission in the brothel, Lakshmi finds herself being coerced into learning the rules, routines, and ruses of prostitution. In the episode “EVERYTHING I NEED TO KNOW NOW,” (pp. 141-142)

Shahanna, a fellow victim, instructs her:

Before [italics added] when you were in the locked room, Shahanna says, Mumtaz sent the customers to you. Now, [italics added] if you want to pay off your debt, you must do what it takes to make them choose you. . . .
Always wash yourself with a wet rag after the man is finished. . . .
If a customer likes you, he may give you a sweet. . .
If a customer likes you, he may give you a tip. . .

The temporal axis of ‘before-now-always’ and the use of conditional clauses mirror the earlier episode ‘EVERYTHING I NEED TO KNOW’ when her mother instructed her on the etiquette of family life. The mirrored linguistic patterning of these episodes (before-now-always: if-then) prompts connections between the two activities in the text. This correspondence is strengthened in publisher Hyperion’s discussion guide (see Appendix G), when students are asked to:

Discuss the vignette entitled ‘Everything I Need to Know Now.’ What do you think of the cultural mandates that she must live by? Compare it to the vignette of the same title that appears later when she is in the city. How does it represent all the changes in her life?

Both episodes are about female existence and identity. But, in the first episode gender roles are associated with culturally sanctioned training, while in the second episode the subservience and conditional causality of a woman’s existence is due to the gendered economics of sex trade. This marked parallelism in the form of the two episodes draws connections between “cultural mandates” and sex trade. I argue that the latent intersection between gendered roles in cultures and human rights violations minimizes economic factors; parents sell their children because of poverty, not because of culture. The fusion of culture and exploitation is underscored by the shawl as a connecting signifier. While the earlier episode (EVERYTHING I NEED TO KNOW) referred to the cultural function of the shawl, it now takes on the dubious roles of a marketing lure, a protective shield, and finally a possible noose.

There are special things you need to know about how to use your shawl, she says.
Flick the ends of your shawl in a come-closer gesture and
You will bring the shy men to your bed. . . .
Draw your shawl to your chin, bend your neck like a peacock.
This will bring the older men to your bed. . . .
Press your shawl to your chin with the back of your hand. . . .
when you must bring a dirty man to your bed. (pp. 142-143)

The reader can now conjecture as to why the girl in the photograph covers her mouth. Perhaps it was not a gesture of voiceless submission, but of repulsion. The passage concludes ominously with another use of the shawl:

There is another way to use a shawl, she says. . . .
That new girl, the one in your old room, she says.
Yesterday morning Mumtaz found her hanging from the rafters. (p. 143)

So, how does Lakshmi break the shackles of a culture portrayed as “simply to endure is to triumph”? How does she escape the walls of “Happiness House”?

Considering the emancipatory role of literacy in the other books discussed in this chapter, what is the role of literacy in Sold? For the women of the brothel, literacy is a curse. As Harish, the little boy who befriends Lakshmi cautions: “If they find out you can read and write, they will think you are planning to escape” (p. 171). Harish goes to a “singing-and-playing school” run by a “kind” American lady. He represents the mediator between the disempowered subaltern and American goodwill. It is he who secretly teaches Lakshmi Hindi and even English, while reassuring her that she can trust Americans, despite Anita’s warning that, ”The Americans will try to trick you into running away. . . . Don’t be fooled. They will shame you and make you walk naked through the streets” (p. 142).

Soon Lakshmi learns “American words” from a storybook given to Harish by the American lady. She can now say:
Big Bird,
Elmo,
Ice cream,
Soccer. (p. 174)

Literacy symbolizes liberation from the darkness of disempowerment, but it is fair to note that the author’s insertion of the cultural icons of American childhood into a distant South Asian context is far removed. We are also given to understand that it is thanks to Harish that the Americans organize a police raid. And most importantly, it is Harish who teaches Lakshmi the words of self-awareness:

“My name is Lakshmi,”
“I am from Nepal.
I am thirteen years old.” (p. 192)

These are the words she repeats to herself, and these are the words of freedom, that she announces to her liberators a year later. Lakshmi learns to articulate her identity thanks to a boy who has been schooled by a “kind” American lady. I argue that Lakshmi’s self-defining articulation is a hegemonic discourse\(^\text{11}\) in so far as it is contingent on relationships established between friendship-innocence-literacy-freedom-America and the resolution of a discursive struggle between two political forces: the

\(^{11}\) Laclau and Mouffe (1985) describe hegemonic discourses as the result of articulation, where articulation is a “practice establishing relations among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of articulatory practice” (p. 105). Torfing (1999) adds that “articulations that take place in a context of antagonistic struggles and conflicts are defined as hegemonic articulations” (p. 298).
American as friend or foe. The role of the “good” American abroad culminates in the final episode titled “THE WORDS HARISH TAUGHT ME.”

From the literary perspective, conclusions are often indicative of an author’s purpose. Stephens (1992) states that “Intentionality can only be fully attributed to a text from the perspective of the close” and “Endings reaffirm what society regards as important issues and preferred outcomes” (pp. 42-43). In Sold, the conclusion affirms the implied readers’ set of values: America(n), freedom, and an individual’s self-identity.

After “days of waiting for the American” who had promised to liberate her, the book concludes with a raid, and Lakshmi’s reassurance that “her” American has arrived:

I know this voice. It is my American . . . .
It is an American, I whisper . . . .
The American is shouting something . . . he is calling out to me . . . .
I cannot go to my American . . . .
But I can still hear the American . . . .
The American calls out . . . .
My American is leaving . . . . Something inside me breaks open, and I run down the steps . . . .
I see my American. There are other men with him, Indian men, and the American lady from the picture.
“My name is Lakshmi”, I say.
“I am from Nepal.
I am fourteen years old.” (p. 263)

In this brief concluding episode of three pages, the word “American” occurs nine times. If the reader takes into consideration the author’s coda of acknowledgment that it could not have been written without the help of South Asian grass roots movements in Nepal and India, then there is a serious gap between fictive rendering and reality. Most importantly, the conclusion casts suspicion on the potential of South Asian social
activism to bring about change, while it appropriates human rights discourse as American rather than global.

An analysis of the book cover, text and discussion guides reveals that the discourse on individual/social change in the Third World is contingent on the oppositional equivalence of a chain of discourses: friendship-literacy-enunciation of consciousness-the American-liberation/ versus culture-gender disempowerment-poverty-sexual exploitation. These connections negate the possibility of change from within the ‘Third World.’ In contrast, the “good” American abroad is at the center of a transformative discourse on the fruition of human rights, literacy and the articulation of individual identity.

In the following books, the transition from being “subjected” to becoming a “subject” happens through an individual’s autonomous development of consciousness, home-grown political organizations, and faith.

*Beneath my Mother’s Feet* (2008): “Now I must make a choice for myself.”

Amjad Qamar, the author of *Beneath my Mother’s Feet* (2008) lived in Pakistan for several years. She currently works in Dublin, Ohio City School District. This is her first book. In an interview with Mary Lee Hahn (Hahn, 2008), she states:

I wanted to let the world know that in Pakistan I saw families who worked hard, women who were independent, and girls who were head strong. Their females were capable, self-assured, and bold individuals living with dignity in a Muslim country, defying most western stereotypes and myths. (para. 7)

Taking into account the author’s comment, *Beneath my Mother’s Feet* can be read as endorsing that Pakistani Muslim women are changing traditionally ascribed gender
roles. Qamar, nonetheless, goes beyond a cultural discourse, by emphasizing the socio-economic context of poverty.

*Beneath my Mother's Feet* is the story of fourteen-year-old Nazia who lives with her parents and siblings in a working class neighborhood of Karachi, Pakistan. Her happy routine of shopping, playing cricket, and going to school is thrown into disarray when her father, Abbu, has an accident at work. Though his injuries are not so dire, Abbu stops working. With no money to pay the rent, mother and daughter work as servants in a posh part of town. The situation gets more desperate when Nazia’s dowry is stolen by her errant brother, Bilal. By now homeless and abandoned by the father, mother and children move into the servant quarters of an affluent woman, Seema. Free labor is the trade-off for free lodging. Despite the long hours, the mother manages to earn some money by cleaning other houses. Nazia takes in sewing for extra cash. Though she pines for her school mates, Nazia finds a friend in Sherzad, a frail servant boy who is forced to work even when he has a raging fever. It is through Sherzad’s plight that Nazia realizes that he too has a choice and “a right to hope for something else” (p. 113). Nazia helps Sherzad escape to his mother, only to realize that his mother has rented all her children to families, so that she may have a steady income. The novel climbs to a frenetic climax when Nazia realizes that she definitely does not want to marry her cousin to whom she was betrothed. Convinced that both Sherzad and she have a better option, Nazia decides to help the boy escape for the second time. This time he will not go back to his mother, who beat him and brought him back to virtual bondage. Torn between a sense of family duty and her own self-actualization, Nazia finally decides to leave. She will live with Ms.
Haroon, her school teacher. The novel concludes with Nazia’s mother giving her daughter a stash of money she had put away for her, knowing full well that one day she would choose her own path. At the end, Nazia, “asked Allah to forgive her for what she was about to do, and she hoped that Amma wouldn’t think she was abandoning her in the same way Bilal had” (p. 193). She leaves with her mother’s blessings.

This story provides readers/students with a narrative that accords agency to South Asian female protagonists battling poverty. The context of poverty raises some pertinent questions: Do the poor really have a choice? Are human rights child labor violations driven by poverty or are they characteristic of a given culture, religion, or nation (note Qamar’s reference to a “Muslim country”)? The following analysis of the book’s cover, text, and the publisher’s discussion guide (Appendix H), brings to fore these issues.
The problem with publishers.

Figure 8: Beneath my Mother’s Feet (2008)

The cover image of *Beneath my Mother’s Feet* shows two women striding past the viewer with a confident and resolute gait. Given our reading conventions, the figures on the cover, moving from left to right, not only urge us to flip the cover and read on, but also indicate a sense of progress (Nodelman, 1988, p. 163). In the background, a wall shows the tell-tale signs of a poor neighborhood: peeling paint, chipped plaster. The title, *Beneath my Mother’s Feet*, is enclosed in an arabesque design associated with Islamic art. A combined textual and visual analysis provides readers with data on how images support, extend, or problematize the narrative’s discourses. In this particular work, the image and title supports a story about two strong Muslim women, a mother and daughter living in poverty, and that the diminutive daughter is subordinated to her mother. It is about gender, class, and filial relationships. Above the title hovers the query, “What must a girl sacrifice to be a good enough daughter?” The question does not appear in the text. I argue that the publisher’s question on the cover is problematic. The following section
clarifies that in spite of Qamar’s demonstration that child labor is fundamentally linked to poverty, the publisher’s hook on the cover and the publisher’s discussion guide (Appendix H), both accentuate a discourse which makes connections between culturally sanctioned gender roles and child labor.

Is it culture, poverty, or a culture of impoverishment and disempowerment?

Human rights issues are often categorized into three generations: the civil and political, the eco-social and the cultural and collective. In this novel, there are three major discourses which fall under the categories of the eco-social and cultural: gender, class, and education as a transformative force. Following Dallmayr’s (2001) advice, I remain wary of a reductionist conflation of the eco-social (class, education) and cultural (gender) dimensions.

In Beneath my Mother’s Feet, female strength is celebrated whereas men are portrayed as weak and parasitical. Men, we are told, “suck the joy from our [women’s] marrow, like leeches” (p. 79). Nonetheless, the men in this story are neither women beaters nor disrespectful, but unfortunate and irresponsible. Class difference and poverty, not gender relationships, are major factors contributing to the exploitation of child labor. The wealthy women live in houses with chandeliers, guards at the door, and limousines. In one instance, while a lavish party rages, none of the guests flinch when ‘memsahib’ Seema slaps the servant’s daughter Nazia in public. Nazia is shocked that her own mother remains silent. Economic inequities and the power that goes with money, seems to fuel abuse and exploitation. It is troubling that the publisher’s discussion guide ignores any connection between the disparity in wealth and the injustices incurred. By implication,
readers are left to surmise that it is the culture that breeds exploitation rather than the material conditions of poverty.

In his book *Human Rights and Choice in Poverty*, Alan Smith (1997) asks the pertinent question: “to what extent might conditions of poverty serve to constrain choice in ways that threaten the freedoms enshrined in human rights” (p. 2). Nazia’s self-awareness is deeply embedded in the notion of individual choice. When Sherzad escapes, Nazia admires him for having “the courage to choose his own road,” and wonders when she would “have the right to start thinking on her own” (p. 113). Her ex-teacher Ms. Haroon tells her “Whether you know it or not, you can choose” (p. 139). We know that she is old enough to fend for herself when she tells her mother:

> You don’t know if any of your choices are wrong or right, Amma. Your intentions were good, and that is all that ever mattered. You decided to seek work instead of letting us starve. You made choices for us when Abbu didn’t. Now I must make a choice for myself. (p. 195)

Ms. Haroon and her best friend Maleeha both convince Nazia that she needs to leave her family and continue her education. When Nazia protests that she could never “abandon” her mother and siblings, who “need” her (p. 139), Maleeha replies, “but you need to think of yourself, too.” The narrator’s commentary on Nazia’s reflection emphasizes the tension between individual choice and family-loyalty-duty.

> Caring for her family, being loyal to Amma, these were duties ingrained within her and could not be changed so easily. . . . No. Leaving Amma was impossible. (p. 156)

In this book for young adults, the tension between self-actualization and familial/communal ties is resolved through a discourse on education. There is, however, a
major difference between Nazia’s dilemma and the publisher’s catchy question on the cover, “What must a girl sacrifice to be a good enough daughter?” Phrased in this manner, a daughter’s relationship with her parents is seen as a culturally mandated “sacrifice” rather than a sense of responsibility for her family’s well-being. It is a question which is insensitive to different manifestations of familial love. A closer look at the novel’s conclusion and references to Islam highlights this glaring contradiction between the publisher’s question and the text.

The publisher’s “hook” question, leads the reader to assume that the title’s locative “beneath” alludes to Nazia’ subservient filial obedience to her mother. True, in this coming-of-age narrative, Nazia develops from a daughter who “will always do whatever” her mother wants (p. 50) - even if it means foregoing her education so that she can help sustain her family - to a person who can make her own choices. But, once she has made her choice, the author lets on that the title comes from one of the many sayings of the Prophet Muhammad about mothers: "The gates of heaven lie beneath the mother's feet." Since mothers guard the “gates of heaven,” and Nazia has her mother’s blessings, the implied message is that a girl’s self-determination is not incompatible with Islam. Her mother’s proactive foresight also defuses any tension between her daughter’s self-actualization and familial ties.

Finally, Nazia’s enactment of choice is dependent on her teacher’s offer to put her through school. The subtext then, is that while poverty can make one vulnerable to child labor exploitation, individual goodwill, literacy and education can offer a way out. The fact remains that Nazia’s siblings are not being educated and may soon be enlisted as household servants. This is a story about individuals. Like Staples’ trilogy and Whelan’s
*Homeless Bird*, it is hoped that more success stories of individuals will finally lead to social change.

The liberal humanist emphasis on the individual is echoed in the teaching guide. Publisher Simon and Schuster’s discussion guide suggests that students “Discuss the part school plays in Nazia's hopes and dreams.” Students are encouraged to empathize with Nazia’s situation, but are not led to consider the broader picture of the underlying connection between education, employment, and the perpetuation of poverty. For instance, a more complex understanding would emerge by comparing Nazia’s “hopes and dreams” with her mother’s warning, “What makes you think a girl like you could be someone, when your brother, a boy with a degree, couldn’t even find a job selling newspapers on the roundabout?” (p. 191). Instead, focusing on inter-personal relationships, students are asked to compare Nazia’s school with theirs, trace the development of the mother-daughter relationship, and describe Nazia’s relationship with her friends. This is an instance of the continuing tradition in literary criticism that celebrates the individual as the maker of social transformation. Critics like Belsey (1980) contend that the reification of individualism excludes collective social activism. Instead, Francesco D’Adamo’s *Iqbal* (2003) and Pegi Deitz Shea’s picture book *The Carpet Boy’s Gift* (2008) narrate an individual’s determination as wedded to social activism, exhibiting agency and political will.
**Iqbal (2003): “Join us! Fight with us!”**

*Iqbal* (2003) by Francesco D’Adamo was first published in Italian in 2001. This is D’Adamo’s third book for young adults. The author also conducts workshops for teachers and parents in pedagogy and adolescence. He lives in Milan, Italy.

*Iqbal* begins with an introduction, reminding the reader that today almost six million children are working in conditions of forced and bonded labor. This chapter book is a fictionalized account of the real life and death of Iqbal Masih, a Pakistani boy who was sold to a carpet factory, to pay off his parents’ debts. Carpet making is particularly dependent on children for the manual dexterity of their small fingers, especially since tinier knots escalate the price of carpets.

D’Adamo retells Iqbal’s courageous crusade against child-bondage, through the voice of a fictional character, Fatima, whose life is changed by Iqbal’s activism. Readers are given an unvarnished sense of the lives of these young weavers who are chained to their looms, their fingers blistered and bleeding, who dream of freedom while living under the constant threat of being thrown into an underground cistern, referred to as the “Tomb.” Yet, in the face of unimaginable suffering they find succor in friendship, and solace in the fading memory of their families. Fatima narrates that, “Sometimes we talked about our families, what we still recalled about them, or even what we had already forgotten and would never remember again” (p. 30). The first time Iqbal Masih manages to escape, he leads the police to the factory only to realize that they have been bribed by the owner. But, all is not lost. During his short stint outside the factory walls, Iqbal had picked up a flyer distributed by an activist group called the Bonded Labour Liberation
Front (BLLF) of Pakistan. Encouraged and hopeful, the children’s yearning for freedom coincides with a newly kindled desire to become literate enough to read the organization’s flyer. It is frail Maria, another enslaved child, who teaches them to read “Stop the Exploitation of Child Labor! . . . Join us! Fight with us!” Thanks to Iqbal’s catalyzing courage and the power of literacy, life is no longer just about survival and the children become “united, strong, friends and something more” (p. 78). When Iqbal escapes for the second time, he returns with members of the BLLF. All the children are freed. Rather than return home, Iqbal decides that “he wants to do something different” (p. 89). He becomes an activist with the Bonded Labour Liberation Front. He goes on to win the Reebok ‘Youth in Action’ award, and travels to the United States and Europe. This is not a “happily ever after story.” The book ends with Iqbal’s return to his village, where he was murdered in 1995. He was about thirteen.

In January 2009, the U.S. Department of Labor presented the first annual Iqbal Masih Award for the Elimination of Child Labor.

The following visual analysis compares two book covers of _Iqbal_. One urges the viewer’s personal engagement, and the other necessitates a decoding of visual metaphors. The analysis of the text and scholarly commentary identifies emancipatory connections between literacy, socio-political activism, and a latent presence of Christianity. The publisher has not released a discussion guide.
Meaning-making through concepts or interpersonal engagement.

In this analysis, I am not concerned with the function of photographs as a “mechanical analogue of reality” (Barthes, 1977, p. 18), the ‘selective tradition’ of representation (as in Staples’ covers), or the power relationship between the viewer and the viewed (as in Sold). This time, I ask if there are differences in the way the viewer makes meaning of images.

In the United States, *Iqbal* was first published as a hardback by Atheneum (see Figure 9), and later as a paperback by Aladdin (see Figure 10). There is a difference between meaning-making from an interactive photograph versus what I refer to as a ‘metaphoric’ visual. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) suggest that in visual semiotics one cannot distinguish between ‘cognition’ and ‘affection’ (p. 77). I disagree. On the contrary, images can privilege one process over another. The Atheneum cover appeals to a more conceptual meaning-making process on the notion of freedom. The Aladdin cover
urges an experiential and affective engagement between two individuals: the viewer and the viewed.

The cover image on the Atheneum paperback conspicuously excludes any representation of a person (see Figure 9). In the foreground, a carpet hangs against a mud plastered wall. Above the title is a window with a view of the sky. The font of the title evokes the Arabic script of Urdu, the language spoken in Pakistan. A shaft of light partially illuminates the title. The rest of the image is in a dark umbra. When there are no vectors between the participants, the picture is conceptual (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996). Here meaning-making happens via symbols and abstracted meanings. Referred to as ‘Symbolic Suggestive’ pictures, these images tend to emphasize atmosphere rather than details, and do not depict a specific moment. Kress and van Leeuwen refer to this process as a propensity toward the “generalized essence” (1996, p.110). The viewer produces meaning via the metaphoric relationship between different signs. For example, Nodelman (1988) suggests that light sources and shadows “are more significantly meaningful than representational. In fact, they are often used symbolically” (p.154) and “their overlap often signals a causal relationship” (p. 171). In this cover, the chiaroscuro juxtaposition between the inside and the outside and darkness and light alludes to the story’s narrative tension between freedom (the window, the sky, light) and entrapment (the dark inside, the carpet). Unlike the 2005 cover (see Figure 9), the earlier cover activates a meaning-making process that abstracts the “generalized essence” of a discourse on freedom.
In the Aladdin paperback, the photograph of a boy leaning against a loom is framed within a carpet (see Figure 10). The boy looks out at the viewer. Much has been written about close-ups and the gaze in photographs. Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) explain that the form of direct address in a close-up photograph “wants something from the viewers - wants them to do something. . . . or to form a pseudo-social bond of a particular kind with the represented participant” (p. 123). The gaze of the boy encourages a transactional reaction between individuals, in this case the “eyeline vector” (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996, p.74) that connects the viewer and the boy on the cover. Like first person narratives and reading guide questions that foreground text-reader connections, this is a meaning-making process that demands interpersonal engagement. At the risk of over simplification, I suggest that these two meaning-making processes are reflected in the way texts are read: the abstracted relationship of concepts and the interpersonal.

**The manifest and latent discourse on global activism.**

Discourses draw relationships that are both manifest and latent (Said, 1979). In *Iqbal* there is a manifest discourse on achieving human rights through the development of literacy and social commitment. Closer analysis, however, reveals a latent Christian evangelism in the text. My purpose is not to collapse into dichotomous arguments that would view this book as yet another instance of a veiled Christian commentary that brings forth the readers’ global evangelism. Rather, I am interested in charting out a discursive map that leads from the text to institutionalized global performance, via a path that is intersected with religious undertones.
Although the language of human rights enables individuals and groups of people the freedom to develop their full capabilities as human beings, irrespective of gender, class, race, culture, or creed, several factors impede the attainment of these universal goals. In both *Beneath my Mother’s Feet* and *Iqbal*, poverty and class domination are the underlying causes for child labor. Unlike the novels in the previous chapter, this is not a gender or cultural issue. The fact that Sherzad (in *Beneath my Mother’s Feet*), Iqbal and many of his co-workers are boys, only serves to highlight that child labor cuts across genders. Neither is it a matter of culture. Poor Pakistani parents are not more prone to sell their children. As Iqbal says, “My parents, like yours, didn’t sell me because they’re bad. They had no choice. It was a terrible decision for them. No it’s not that” (p.89). His words remind the reader that child labor is a consequence of poverty’s lack of choice.

What motivates individuals to reach the awareness that they have a right to exercise their choice and fulfill their potential as human beings? In *Beneath my Mother’s Feet*, Nazia’s friendship with Sherzad kindled her awareness. In *The Homeless Bird*, it was thanks to a wealthy lady’s philanthropic mission. In this book, a political organization activates Iqbal’s individuation. This is a discourse about how change can come about through the social activism of organizations like The Bonded Liberation Front, which promote education for child workers. Individual and/or socio-political commitment is not enough. We are given to understand that it is literacy that enables awareness of these movements, brings freedom, and provokes change. Maria, the girl who teaches them to read says, “You have to know how to read to ever be free” (p. 76). Her statement encapsulates the connection between social development and human
rights. It is a discourse that charts relationships between education, consciousness, and freedom. The question on how stories depict the relationship between civil, political, social, economic, and cultural rights, makes the reader aware that an individual’s human right to freedom is connected to the civil right to education, the economic right to minimum sustenance, and the social right to childhood.

Discursive formations are also covert. A closer reading of the text draws out the broader ideological implications of a latent religious discourse in *Iqbal*. Compared to *Beneath my Mother’s Feet*, in which the Koran is directly invoked, Islam is largely absent in *Iqbal*. There are only two occasions when Islam is mentioned: a muezzin’s call to prayer and that the children work even on Friday, the holy day. It would appear that the captive children don’t follow any religious observance. Christianity, however, is mentioned in the concluding chapter. According to Stephens (1992), “narrative structure, and especially closure, is an ideologically powerful component of texts” (p.44). The last chapter is a letter from Maria (the girl who taught the children to read) to Fatima. Maria tells of the day Iqbal died. Iqbal had gone to his village, to visit his parents for “Easter, the Christian festival” (p.116). Soon after church service, he was shot. Maria writes:

> Some people say that at that precise moment a sudden thunderstorm broke, and raindrops the size of large coins hit the ground and the thunder shook the roofs of the houses. (p.118)

The symbolic opening of the heavens is not accidental. Two weeks later, Maria writes, a boy “with bruises from chains around his ankles” appeared. He had the same voice and eyes as Iqbal. Maria is convinced that “It was Iqbal. I swear, he was identical” (p.119). The biblical allusion to Iqbal’s resurrection is unmistakable. Read from this
perspective, Maria’s conclusion that “He changed our lives and will be with us forever” resounds with evangelical connotations. These undertones thicken when one considers that Masih and Maria are both Christian names. Masih, a common Christian surname in Pakistan, means messiah (Kuklin, 1998).

In the previous chapter I dealt with Clare Bradford’s (2007) commentary on Staples’ novels, which underscored the political implications of a “selective tradition” in the representation of Islam. Here, I seek out connections between human rights, the text’s latent discourse on Christianity, the commentary it has generated, and the practice of global activism. In her paper, “Child Crusaders: the Literature of Global Childhood,” Lisa Hermine Makman (2002) examines how Iqbal Masih has become a model for Western child “crusaders.” She observes that ever since Iqbal Masih’s death, the word “crusade” is often used in association with the movement to eradicate child labor, and especially so when Iqbal’s name is evoked. Makman concludes that “implicit in this concept of a “crusade” is the opposition between a civilized West and a barbaric East.” (p. 295). The process of “othering” is much more problematic than a simple reduction to the clash of East/West or the binaries of civilization vs. barbarism. ‘Perspective-consciousness’ urges a more multi-dimensional viewpoint. On Iqbal’s death, Timothy Ryan wrote in “The Christian Science Monitor” (2001) that though Iqbal’s predicament was surely driven by poverty, there is a relationship between him being Christian and his bondage. He contends that “most people who are bonded and enslaved are converted Muslims, indigenous tribal people, Hindus and Christians - in short anyone outside the mainstream of Sunni Islamic society.” In fact, as recently as August 2009, Christians in
Pakistan were reportedly burnt to death (Tavernise, 2009). In the light of these commentaries, D’Adamo’s narrative participates in a global discourse that connects human rights violations to religious persecution.

The above observation illuminates how literature engages in macro-discourses on global events. Literature as discourse also participates in institutional activities. Global non-profit organizations and education are two such institutions. Mills (1997) observes that discourse is not a disembodied collection of statements, but is “enacted within a social context.” She adds that “Institutions and social context therefore play an important determining role in the development, maintenance and circulation of discourse” (p.10). In this respect, Iqbal is embedded in a surrounding discourse on how students engage with issues in the Third World. Ever since his death, Iqbal Masih has become an emblematic crusader inspiring caring adolescents to global social action (Makman, 2002). One such instance is Craig Kielburger, who at the age of ten, was so inspired by Iqbal Masih’s life that he launched a Web site (www.freethemotherchildren.org) that seeks to raise awareness of child labor. From the perspective of global education, Iqbal Masih’s life appeals to the cosmopolitan model of global citizenship that transcends national boundaries. As he says in the novel, “it’s your business, too. And it’s not true that there’s no hope. Look at me. I had hope.” (p. 111).

D’Adamo’s fictive rendering of Iqbal Masih’s life lies at the intersection of many contingent discourses on human rights in social transformation: literacy, social or political activism, faith, non-profit organizations, and pedagogical models of global activism. Although not free from latent evangelism, the book’s narration of a real-life
Pakistani boy gives agency to its protagonists, who are transformed from victims to activists.

_The Carpet Boy’s Gift (2003): “If we go together, the school will protect us.”_

_The Carpet Boy’s Gift (2003)_ written by Pegi Deitz Shea and illustrated by Leane Morin, is a fictional picture book that honors Iqbal Masih’s legacy. Shea’s multicultural books include _The Whispering Cloth_ (1996), on a Southeast Asian refugee girl. In the _Tangled Threads: A Hmong Girl’s Story_ (2003), the character from _The Whispering Cloth_ finally immigrates to America, but finds assimilation difficult. Leane Morin has also illustrated _Shy Mama’s Halloween_ by Anne Broyles.

_The Carpet Boy’s Gift (2003)_ provides another aspect of child labor. Readers witness how poverty can drive parents to ‘rent’ their children to factories during the day. The parents of Nadeem, his brother Hakeem, and cousin Amina, ‘rent’ them to a carpet factory for a loan of 1,000 rupees. They work from dawn to sunset, hoping to pay off their parents’ debt. At night, they return home to a mother’s love. In the dim, dusty factory, Nadeem struggles to stifle his violent coughing, afraid that if he coughs blood (an indication of tuberculosis), he will be sold to another factory far away from home.

Nadeem’s life changes when he meets Iqbal Masih, who tells him about the Bonded Labor Abolition Act. Though he is inspired by Iqbal Masih, Nadeem is still torn between the prospect of freedom and a sense of responsibility for his parents’ safety. Finally, the realization that his four-year-old brother Hakim will end up in a factory propels him to lead all the bonded children to the open gates of the school next door. He turns his back on bondage, cognizant of the need to make a difficult choice – to fulfill his parents’
obligation or to pave the way for a better life for his younger sibling. He walks out of the gates of exploitation and into the doors of empowered education.

The following analysis underscores how in a picture book format aimed at younger readers, the family unit is intact and continues to be a source of love. Apart from the reassurance of parental love and a happy ending, *The Carpet Boy’s Gift* also echoes the afore-mentioned discursive formation in which human rights is associated with education, political activism, and individual agency. It is the only book in this selection that incorporates a teaching guide that directly addresses the responsibilities of global citizenship.

**Literacy and hope.**

![Image of The Carpet Boy’s Gift](https://example.com/clothboysgift.jpg)

Figure 11: *The Carpet Boy’s Gift* (2003)

Lawrence Sipe (1998) describes images in picture books as a complex visual sign that “present(s) a simultaneity of various components” as against the linear time sequence of language. This characteristic simultaneity of action is seen in the cover of *The Carpet Boy’s Gift* (see Figure 11), which continues on the back cover, and is repeated within the book too (see Figure 12). The cover is a joyful rendering of a busy
bazaar in Pakistan. People are buying and selling. Camels, rickshaws and cycles crowd the street (There is a conspicuous absence of modern modes of transportation). In the foreground a young boy is carrying a carpet. His expression is not forlorn as in Iqbal’s cover. Eyes closed and smiling, he seems to be dreaming happily. Even before we read the story, we know that the bright colors and the boy’s smile bode well. Written for younger readers, the reassuring visual clues on the cover signal a happy ending. The red and gold flag of the Bonded Labor Liberation Front (BLLF) flies in the upper left hand corner of the frame, foreshadowing the story’s plot.

Figure 12: “a beautiful red and gold flag rippled above a building”

When the cover image is repeated within the book, the reference to BLLF is explicitly supported by the text (see Figure 12). As Nadeem presumably walks from left to right, the recto page encourages the reader to connect text and image:
At the end of the road a beautiful red and gold flag rippled above a building. What flag was that? Nadeem could not help his curiosity. Maybe he’d walk by there before he headed home.

As in *Iqbal*, in this book too, the emancipatory promise of socio-political activism goes hand in hand with literacy, except this time there is the added reassurance of parental love and happiness. The book’s frontal endpaper bears a quote from Iqbal Masih’s Reebok Youth in Action Award acceptance speech (1994), “I appeal to you that you stop people from using children as bonded laborers because the children need to use a pen rather than the instruments of child labor.” Above it is a picture of Iqbal Masih giving Nadeem a yellow pen. When this image is repeated in the book, the text explains the title (see Figure 13). Iqbal says, “. . . here is a gift for you. A pen, not a knife, should be your tool. You can go to this school down the street and learn to read and write.” The juxtaposition of a knife and pen is reinforced when, shielded by the pen, Nadeem finally uses his knife to cut himself loose (see Figure 14).

This shift in the function of the pen alerts me to an embedded discourse. I bear in mind Gillian Rose’s suggestion in *Visual Methodologies* (2001) that the researcher
should ask: “Are there meaningful clusters of words and images? What associations are established within such clusters? What connections are there between such clusters?” (p. 151). Here, the yellow pen takes on the added symbolism of education as a protective intermediary which enables the physical act of breaking free.

The book ends with Nadeem convincing all the children to leave the factory. Opening the door, he exclaims, “If we go together, the school will protect us. Look, its gates are open!” The conscious choice of an individual is accompanied by the prospects of a better life and freedom for the collectivity.

Figure 15: “Nadeem stepped into the sunlight, in the steps of Iqbal”

On the last page (see Figure 15), there is a bird’s eye view of the children crossing the threshold to freedom. The red and gold flag of the BLLF flies at the school’s gate. Above them, birds soar in flight. Below, the children hold hands, mirroring the flying birds. Nodelman (1988) points out that symbolic signs are linked together through the recognition of a common discourse which is informed by cultural assumptions (p. 106).
In this case, birds in flight are synonymous with freedom, just as a yellow pen alludes to the ubiquitous yellow pencil in American schools.

The nexus between education and social change is strengthened in the teacher resource at the end of the book. Apart from a brief biography of Iqbal Masih, readers can learn about the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959), the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the history of child labor. They are encouraged to “map the sources” of their clothes and toys, and consider why they think school is important.

The first page of the discussion guide has a picture of the children at school; a visual clue to the story’s happy ending (see Figure 16). The part-whole relationship between the image and the surrounding text points to analytical connections between happiness, school, and global education (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996).
In addition, Tilbury House Publisher’s Web site offers several suggestions for activities that further the understanding of global challenges, as well as transformative action (referred to as “service learning”) by students. The preface to the activities is particularly indicative of the book’s relevance to global education:

The activities selected here are intended to help encourage problem-solving skills on the part of readers as they examine complex social issues that are raised in The Carpet Boy's Gift. We hope adults will be able to help place this particular story in a larger cultural and historical context.

A remarkable aspect of this guide, which emphasizes a wider understanding of history, is the assignment to research the impact of early photographers such as Walker Evans and Louis Hines on the movement to end child labor in the U.S. The purpose is to “build historical awareness about and help children see that social change is possible.”

The question forces one to look back into the past (and present) of many countries where families all worked to ensure the survival of their cohesive unit. As in the teaching guide of Rickshaw Girl, the emphasis is on the historical process of social change, rather than binary comparisons. This represents a welcome alternative to conventional discussion guides that highlight cultural differences. The result is a book that is clearly positioned as a springboard for learning about the world and that recognizes the complexity of educating youngsters about human rights violations abroad.

The Carpet Boy’s Gift is careful to accentuate a mother’s love, sibling camaraderie, and a happy ending. Unlike the chapter book, Beneath my Mother’s Feet, here the family unit is an unproblematic source of support. And unlike Iqbal, the children are not estranged from their parents. In this picture book for younger readers, there is no
tension between self-actualization and familial/communal ties, and power relationships with individuals (like the proprietor of the factory) are not delved into. Yet, the author manages to navigate the complexity of familial love amidst poverty and exploitation, in ways that do not minimize the hope and agency of victims.

The next book, *The Roses in my Carpets* (1998), confronts the reality of children who work as apprentices (under the sponsorship of a benefactor), support their families, and go to school. Juxtaposed with *The Carpet Boy’s Gift*, this book points to an important discussion on the difference between child labor and children who work (see footnote 28). Set in an Afghan refugee camp in Pakistan, Khan narrates the indomitable human capacity to survive and thrive despite the psychological impact of the horrors of war.


*The Roses in my Carpets* (1998), is written by Rukhsana Khan and illustrated by Ronald Himler. Rukhsana Khan was born in Lahore, Pakistan, and immigrated to Canada at the age of three. She is the author of numerous children’s books, including *Muslim Child* (1999), a collection of short stories and poems on the lives of Muslim children around the world. Ronald Himler is an award-winning author and illustrator of numerous children’s picture books and covers of young adult fiction. He illustrated *The Wall* (1992) and *Fly Away Home* (1993), both by Eve Bunting.

*The Roses in my Carpets* narrates a day in the life of an Afghan boy who is living with his mother and sister in a refugee camp in Pakistan. The memory of war still haunts him. Written in the first person, the book begins with the narrator (we never get to know his name) recounting his recurring nightmare, “It’s always the same. The jets scream
overhead. They’ve seen me.” In spite of the ominous beginning, this picture book is a story about hope. The boy goes to school, learns the craft of weaving carpets, and manages to shoulder the responsibility of his widowed mother and his younger sister, thanks to “someone far away” who pays for his training as a weaver. He is “a sponsored child.” While he is weaving this “little piece of paradise,” word arrives that his sister Maha has been struck by a truck. Maha’s accident is another traumatic turning point in his life. At the hospital, as he consoles his mother and prays for his sister, our young protagonist realizes that he has grown up. Maha’s legs are saved. (We are told that his sponsor will pay for the operation). That night, once again, he dreams of jets “tearing the fabric of the sky.” Only this time, when he runs away from the exploding bombs, his mother and sister run with him till they find “a space, the size of a carpet, where the bombs cannot touch us. Within that space there are roses.” These are the very same roses he had so meticulously woven into his carpet. The motif of roses suggests that thanks to carpet weaving, the boy has overcome the traumatic memories of war in Afghanistan.

As Rukhsana Khan’s Web site mentions (www.rukhsanakhan.com), The Roses in my Carpets was inspired by the author’s sponsorship of a young Afghan boy living in a refugee camp in Pakistan. Since the book was written in 1998, the reader may surmise that the author is referring to the exodus following the Soviet invasion. But, in “Of Politics and Children’s books,” the author remarks: “I wrote The Roses in my Carpets to deal with the Russian invasion of Afghanistan. How sad that so many years later, it is just as relevant” (Khan, n.d., para. 3). All royalties from the book continue to go toward helping Afghan child refugees and orphans.
Though it is written for a young audience, the text-image of *The Roses in my Carpets* offers a complex view of the social, economic and political context of children who work to support their families, albeit under the auspices of a benevolent sponsor. It is the only book in this selection in which solace also comes from the practice of Islam.

**Overcoming trauma through faith and work.**

![The Roses in my Carpets](image)

Figure 17: *The Roses in my Carpets* (1998) cover and last page.

The front cover of *The Roses in my Carpets* is also the last page of the book (see Figure 17). Reminiscent of the last page of Shea and Morin’s *The Carpet Boy’s Gift*, here too, the birds and the human mimicking of flight are symbolic of freedom. This time it is freedom from the dark memories of war. On the verso page of the concluding double-page spread, the brown smudge recalls the bomb blasts of the first page (see Figure 18), with its unsparing illustration of the destruction wreaked by war.
Yet, rather than emerging as a story of victimization by war and displacement, Khan tells the story of a boy who overcomes the psychological effects of war. Compared to the other books, the discourse on education is not entirely positive. This boy “hates” school. “We sit on rough mats that rub our ankles raw. I’d rather be weaving carpets.” Instead, weaving carpets and prayer help him through his trauma. Hopeful that he will become a master craftsman, learning the art of carpet weaving empowers him both economically and psychologically. The author deftly transforms carpet weaving from a tool of oppression to a restorative mechanism. This in turn raises very important questions regarding the difference between child labor and children who work, as differentiated by the International Labor Organization (see footnote no. 28).
The above double-page spread (see Figure 19) exemplifies the ‘narrative’ use of color and line. Nodelman (1988) observes that color evokes “specific emotions and attitudes” (p. 60). The emotional impact of color is particularly clear in this illustration. As in the rest of the book, dark brown hues convey the boy’s memories; a bomb blast in the background and the thought of his father, who was a farmer “at the mercy of weather or anyone who would steal his land and crops.” The diagonal lines of the father’s ploughed field merge with his loom’s warp, connecting a past dependency on power hierarchies, to a future independence that “no one can take away.” According to Gyorgy Kepes, “linear continuance arrests the attention and forces the eye into a pursuit movement” (as cited in Nodelman, 1998, p. 160). Here, linear continuance connects past to present, disempowerment to hope. On the recto side of the spread, the boy weaves the roses in his carpet, confident that “soon I will be a master craftsman and my sponsor’s money will not be needed. I will hold my head high for the sake of my father who died ploughing our field in the war. He would never have taken aid from a sponsor.” As a
sponsor of Afghan refugee children, Rukhsana Khan is mindful of the sense of honor, often associated with Afghan culture. And as a practicing Muslim, Islam figures prominently in *The Roses in my Carpets*.

The story, which takes place within one day, is punctuated with prayer. It begins with the muezzin’s call to prayer at dawn (Muslims pray five times a day). In the afternoon the boys break for the Zuhr or midday pray. Prayer is not just a routine. It provides solace and self-awareness. Just as in *The Carpet Boy’s Gift* sibling love had prompted Nadeem to take the bold step toward freedom, here too it is the protagonist’s role as caretaker of a younger sibling that motivates his coming-of-age awareness. This time, however, realization is accompanied by prayer. Prayer, he says, makes him feel better. In this respect, *The Roses in my Carpets* is unique in giving voice to the role of Islam as a source of solace. To readers who are unfamiliar with Pakistan, Himler’s illustrations provide an invaluable visual support and extension. For instance, readers can observe the muezzin in the mosque’s minaret (see Figure 20).

![Figure 20: “the muezzin calls me to prayer”](image-url)
Pakistani society is presented as heterogeneous and dynamic. People wear both traditional and western clothing, donkeys and cars share the road (see Figure 21), a woman teaches a room full of boys (see Figure 22), and female nurses work in the hospital. Himler’s juxtaposing of the traditional and modern raises the question of whether the visual discourse is one of contrast or confluence. In short, is it pertinent to ask the question, “what or who is being contrasted textually and/or visually?” For the purpose of this analysis, I shall concentrate on the image of the road (see Figure 21).

![Figure 21: “A car brushes past”](image1)

![Figure 22: “I hate school”](image2)

Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) state that “the placement of elements . . . endows them with specific information values relative to each other” (p.181). Hierarchical, contrasting, or disconnected relationships are conveyed through elements that are visually separated by empty spaces, discontinuities of color, shape, or framing device, such as in the picture of the schoolroom (see Figure 22). In contrast, in the road scene, elements are visually joined to each other through similarities of colors, overlays (the man on the
donkey and the car), and vectors of continuity. The composition conveys the intersection of the traditional and modern.

Rukhsana Khan goes a step further in broadening our contextual frames. The teacher’s guide on the author’s Web site asks a very pertinent question: “Imagine you had to work to support your family, what job would you be interested in learning about? Why?” (Appendix I). Readers are thereby persuaded to confront the harsh realities that force communities to make children work in order to ensure the survival of the family unit. More importantly, the readers’ transposition is within their own context, thereby alluding to the universalism of this predicament. Needless to say, the human rights caveat is that work should not interfere with schooling, or any aspect of familial, mental, physical, emotional, and social well-being. This argument deserves more attention in the classroom’s discussion of human rights.

Despite this book’s dark themes of death, war, and responsibility at an early age, it bears the stamp of children’s rather than young adult literature. Trites (2000) states that “Children’s literature often affirms the child’s sense of Self and her or his personal power” (p. 3), as represented in the comfort and security of institutions such as the home/family/talent/school. In contrast, protagonists in adolescent literature re-define their identity by confronting and negotiating with the authority exercised through social constructions of race, gender, class, and culture. In The Roses in my Carpets the protagonist acquires a sense of self through his talent and faith, and within the security of his family, community, and sponsor.
All the other texts in this selection highlighted the importance of literacy and individual choice in the formation of identity. Individual choice is often portrayed as being in opposition to culture, family, or other oppressive circumstances. *The Roses in my Carpets*, offers another perspective to assumptions on logocentric knowledge and the tension between the individual and culture. While not discounting the importance of education and choice, Rukhsana Khan gives equal value to family, culture, skill and traditional craftsmanship. She thereby blends tradition and modernity. In the midst of the horrors of a war exacerbated by poverty, the predicament of Afghan refugees is depicted with its religious icons intact, and its culture untarnished by polemics. If Khan’s protagonist is already on a path toward self-realization, in the next chapter’s selection of books, children and adolescents are still struggling to survive the impact of war and the refugee crisis.

**Conclusion**

Human rights concerns are not bound by the parameters of nation, culture, race, class and gender. As identified in international documents, all human beings have civil, social, economic, political, and individual rights. Though the intention of human rights stands on firm ethical grounds, a critical global perspective acknowledges and factors in tensions between individual and communal rights, and questions the primacy of individual rights over a people’s social and economic rights (e.g. an education and job). From a political point of view, recent events have brought to fore the troublesome question of whether the imperative of human rights can supersede national sovereignty. These polemical issues are not mere academic exercises, but define how we, as a nation
and as individuals, choose to participate in the world. Educators, who use transcultural literature to broach the problem of human rights violations, need to be mindful that these themes are intertwined with larger issues.

The questions proposed in this chapter, when combined with a discourse analysis of text and image, sensitize readers to the difficult choices individuals, families, and nations have to make. The idea of choice is at the heart of human rights. Children, who are forced to work, cannot exercise their freedom to choose. Nor can the poor. The disabling effects of poverty remains a core issue in human rights violations of child labor laws. Human rights activists therefore have to attend to a chain of events: fostering the individual’s awareness of self-empowering choice, enacting emancipation, and developing the social and economic capability of the individual. It is not coincidental then, that all the plots follow this empirical trajectory. In _Beneath my Mother’s Feet_, the protagonist’s gradual coming-of-age coincides with the awareness that she too has a choice. In _Iqbal_ and _The Carpet Boy’s Gift_, change comes about through collective social and political activism. In _Sold_, an American is the enabler, and in _The Roses in my Carpets_ it is faith in Islam and a boy’s talent that motivates his self-empowerment. These differences are not surprising: authors tell stories from varying perspectives. What remains significant is that when these books are considered as a discourse on human rights, there is both shared ground and latent discursive struggles in the narration of how consciousness and emancipation comes about.

When the reader asks, “What discourses are included and excluded in the texts or image?” the most significant difference is the inclusion or exclusion of religion. Even in
this limited sample of five books, there is a deep seated tension between secular and religious renderings of how individual and social empowerment should be fostered. Muslim authors Khan and Qamar are distinct in their inclusion of Islam. For Khan, Islam is a source of strength, and for Qamar a quote from the Koran provides a compass for living. A closer reading of D’Adamo’s *Iqbal* surfaces traces of Christian evangelism, but also points to the persecution of Christians in Pakistan. One might argue that in the face of such cruel servitude, debating on the virtues of secularism or religious faith is far removed from the urgent themes of the books. Yet, an understanding of the role of religion and its symbolism is important for educators who will need to familiarize themselves with the emancipatory narratives of child labor.

This study’s combination of literary criticism with social theories reveals interesting observations regarding genre and audience, especially the difference between children’s and young adult’s literature. Two questions are pertinent: “*How do picture books and novels differ in the resolution of socio-cultural, economic and political problems, especially with respect to power relations?*” And, “*How do authors resolve the tension between individual self-actualization and familial/communal ties?*” The findings of this analysis illustrate that whereas picture books avoid any tension between an individual’s enactment of choice and the protagonist’s familial or cultural context, the coming-of-age genre favors a process of self-actualization that comes about through a conflict with social, economic or cultural context. From a literary perspective, the coming-of-age young adult novel genre showcases the cherished growth of self identity in spite of power relations (Trites, 2000). Engaging with these texts through the bi-focal
lenses of these two questions, prompts me to conclude that the conflict between the individual and family/community need not be due to an author’s cultural insensitivity, but inheres in the genre of young adult literature. Critique, however, becomes imperative when evaluative hierarchies are implied. For instance, educators should be wary of causalities drawn between human rights violations and culture. In _Sold_, equating Hinduism with a fatalistic acceptance of oppression diminishes the potential for cultural change. This approach is endorsed when teaching guides lead students to seek similar connections between religion and oppression, and deny the empowering aspects of faith. Additionally, the linkage of the protagonist’s self-awareness and emancipation to Americans undermines the role of local activists.

All the books propose that literacy and education motivate individual choice, develop the individual’s capability, and can engender social activism for the cause of human rights. There is, however, evidence of a counter-discourse to an unexamined causality between education and empowerment. When educators and readers are aware of the relationship between social and economic rights, alternative readings emerge. Amjed Qamar and Rukhsana Khan, both of South Asian heritages, are the only authors who raised questions about education and employment, or the limits of a logocentric education. In Qamar’s _Beneath my Mother’s Feet_, the mother asks a relevant question: “What makes you think a girl like you could be someone, when your brother, a boy with a degree, couldn’t even find a job selling newspapers on the roundabout?” (p. 191). In _The Roses in my Carpets_, Rukhsana Khan highlights skill and apprenticeship as empowerment. Both these authors are raising important questions regarding the goal of
education. It is this kind of contextual complexity that lends a critical perspective to the way these narratives are read.

Regardless of the tension between individual rights and social rights, exploitation of children is a human rights violation that stands on firm ethical grounds. But, what happens when the ethics of human rights and peace education directly confronts the political demands of national allegiance in times of war? What happens when the narration of war is caught between the horns of cultural or national identities and the homogeneity of universal human rights? The next chapter examines how authors wrestle with such quandaries when narrating the wars in Afghanistan and the refugee crisis.
CHAPTER 6: WAR AND REFUGEES

The year 1989 triggered worldwide political, social, and economic changes. In Afghanistan, the image of departing convoys of defeated Soviet troops closed a historical chapter. The post-1989 era, nevertheless, did not augur well for Afghanistan – the last site of superpower confrontation and unfortunately the first arena of global conflict in the 21st century. Today, with the continued “war on terror,” Afghanistan and neighboring Pakistan remain at the center of global geopolitics. There is another story. While powers sparring for control, Afghans fled to neighboring Pakistan and Iran, reaching a peak of 6.2 million refugees in 1990. According to the UN High Commissioner of Refugees (UNHCR), in 2007, more than 2.15 million Afghans still lived in Pakistan (UNHCR, 2007).

The protracted wars in Afghanistan have inspired proponents of peace education to write award-winning books on the human consequences of war. Written for children and young adults, these books depict juvenile agency at times of war, friendship in the midst of loss, communal action, and dreams of hope. Most importantly, the material

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12 Sections of this analysis have appeared in Lakshmanan, M. (2009, January). Reading Canadian children’s literature as models of international relations. *Journal of children’s literature, 3*(1), 68-88.
presented specifically relates to the current geopolitical situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan. This chapter examines the portrayal of the impact of war on children and families, the challenges of the refugee “problem,” and eventual immigration to the U.S.A.

The narration of war crystallizes many of the issues discussed throughout this study. Muslim culture and Islam resurface in Suzanne Fisher Staples’ *Under the Persimmon Tree* (2005), which challenges the claim that the American presence in Pakistan and Afghanistan symbolizes a “clash of civilizations.” The tension between religious worldviews and secularism plays out in Debora Ellis’ intentional secularism in *The Breadwinner Trilogy*, comprising of *The Breadwinner* (2001), *Parvana’s Journey* (2002) and *Mud City*

Narrating the plight of refugees, *Four Feet, Two Sandals* (2007) and Farah Ahmedi’s memoir *The Story of My Life: an Afghan Girl on the Other Side of the Sky* (2005) follow a refugee’s long journey from a war-torn country to the safe-haven of America. If *The House of Djinn* was concerned with how Pakistan can “survive” as a nation, these stories narrate what a good nation can offer its citizens. Education, which hitherto supported social development and cultural change within South Asian societies, now embarks on the mission of promoting global peace as depicted in Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin’s *Three Cups of Tea: One Man’s Journey to Change the World*. . . *One Child at a Time* (2009) and its picture book version *Listen to the Wind: the Story of Dr. Greg & Three Cups of Tea* (2009). The publication of these books in the first decade of the 21st century demonstrates the ascendancy of peace education in children’s and young adult literature.
This chapter integrates selected schools of International Relations (IR) theories to identify how global relations are constructed for young readers of different age groups. In the words of Paul Wilkinson:

International relations is a very broad concept. In modern usage it includes not only relations between states but also between states and non-state organizations such as churches, humanitarian relief organizations and multinational corporations, and between states and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), such as the UN and the EU. (2007, p. 1)

IR theories either attribute political agency to the nation (realism), international organizations (liberalism), forefront the influence of multinational corporations and globalization (interdependence), further the emancipation of all humanity (critical), or examine how texts and visuals construct international relations (poststructural). These theories point to what models of international relations are privileged by these authors.

The purpose of this chapter is three-fold: (1) to illuminate how children’s and young adult literature share certain common models of IR theories when narrating the contemporary world and its challenges, (2) to shed light on how these narrations of war, refugees, and global challenges differ with respect to the implied age group, and what this can tell us about the social construction of the global citizen, and (3) to assess the opportunities and limitations of the proposed models of peace education. The textual analysis of discourse is accompanied by an examination of the semiotic work performed by text-images in the picture books, *Four Feet, Two Sandals* and *Listen to the Wind: the Story of Dr. Greg & Three Cups of Tea*. These picture books offer an opportunity to examine how text-images in books for a much younger audience convey a discourse on the role of international organizations and education in international relations.
Global Education & Peace Education

War and refugees are important aspects of both international relations and global education. In “Global education and children’s literature,” Jennifer Ladd (1993), suggests that children’s literature not only supports teaching about another country, but can broach “problems” like immigration, refugees, peace/war, and the environment. The notion of global citizenship education goes beyond awareness of global problems, reaching out to an ethic of peace. In the Encyclopedia of Peace Education, Lynn Davies (2008) describes global education for peace as requiring knowledge of world events, capacity for critical analysis, political skills and willingness for joint action to produce active world citizens who understand the causes and effects of war (pp. 109-114). Deborah Ellis' Breadwinner Trilogy and Greg Mortenson’s books are both associated with peace education. In 2004, the Jane Addams Children's Book Award jury honored Ellis' The Breadwinner Trilogy with a special commendation. The award is given to children’s and young adult books that “promote the cause of peace, social justice, world community, and the equality of the sexes and all races as well as meeting conventional standards for excellence” (JAPA, 2008). Greg Mortenson was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2009. The young reader and picture book versions of Three Cups of Tea are accompanied by the Pennies for Peace Curriculum Resource Guides, available for free at www.penniesforpeace.org. Locating these books within the framework of peace education, urges an examination of how they resolve the opposition between the ethically motivated goal for peace, and political reality.
War/peace in Children’s and Young Adult literature & International Relations

It is commonly held that there is a difference between the nineteenth century patriotic war story that served nationalist agendas and the modern preoccupation with the morality of war. As Myers comments, contemporary war stories for the young, are more concerned with the psychological impact of war on childhood and increasingly feature “strong heroines, instead of soldiers” (2008, p. 25). In the previous chapter, Rukhsana Khan’s *The Roses in my Carpets*, the protagonist’s nightmares are a symptom of his post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In this chapter’s selection of books, Najma in *Under the Persimmon Tree* (Staples, 2005) stops speaking after her mother and brother’s death, and “swivels uncontrollably, turning her shoulders and shaking them to the rhythm of her head” (p. 183). A turn for the better comes with her rediscovery of trust and friendship.

Both the *Breadwinner Trilogy* and *Four Feet, Two Sandals* follow the trials faced by two young girls. The underscoring of friendship and psychological resilience in times of war, that is so typical of children’s literature, is not however, devoid of ideological subtexts.

The narration of on-going wars needs to be approached with a great deal of care. As Stephens (1992) and Trites (2000) point out, the narrative of children’s and young
adult literature constructs selfhood by interpellating\textsuperscript{13} dominant ideologies that can be political in nature (Trites, 2000, p. 24). From this perspective, literature that confronts the contemporary geo-political scenario is especially entwined in the construction of subjectivity within national and international political discourses. Mitzi Myers concludes that war stories are inherently didactic, whether they “inculcate patriotic moral values or, more often, question the morality of war” (2008, p. 19). She adds:

Revelatory and riveting, the diverse contemporary genres encompassed by war stories at the twentieth century’s close are arguably the most relevant “didactic” forms for young readers who will shape the new millennium’s global, multicultural society. (p. 23)

Refugee stories provide another dimension of war stories. Julia Hope (2008) observes that refugee stories that focus on present conflicts and experiences are a recent genre in children’s literature. She adds that though much research has been done on war stories, especially the holocaust, there is little research on the refugee experience in children’s literature.

If one considers the didactic nature of war stories in the context of the current North American (USA and Canada) involvement in countries like Afghanistan and

\textsuperscript{13} The word “interpellation” is used by Louis Althusser to describe how ideology functions. According to him, “the individual is interpellated as a (free) subject in order that he shall submit freely to the commandments of the Subject, i.e. in order that he shall (freely) accept his subjection, i.e. in order that he shall make the gestures and actions of his subjection ‘all by himself’” (2001, p. 123).
Pakistan, it would be useful to ask how award winning books comment on the political situation in this region, what political ideologies are being furthered, what discourses are being excluded or challenged, and to what end. My premise is that when viewed as a body of texts configured by global events and concerns, these books find their coordinates in political conversations that reflect International Relations (Lakshmanan, 2009).

Reading literature through political lenses is not new. From the perspective of literary criticism and cultural studies, Edward Said’s landmark study of Orientalism (1979) considered the connection between literature and the politics of colonialism. As Said remarked, literary representations are a “considerable dimension of modern political-intellectual culture” (1979, p.12). In contrast, the study of International Relations in political science has been far more insulated from literary studies. There has, however, been a recent challenge to this approach, often referred to as the “aesthetic turn.” Largely influenced by poststructural theory (Derrida, Foucault, Lyotard), political scientists have turned to discourse, textuality/narrative and culture, claiming that the political comes into being through representation (Darby, 1998, p.18). As Foucault has shown, literature and politics are, after all, recent epistemological categories (1972, p.22). In the 2003 edition of the journal “Global Society” the relation between fiction and International Relations sparked a debate between political scientists Gerard Holden and Roland Beiker. The dispute was over how scholars of International Relations can learn from literature, poetry and art, not whether they should do so in the first place. Paul Sheeran, in Literature and International Relations: Stories in the Art of Diplomacy,
illustrates “what it is to read literature as a way of studying International Relations” (2007, p. 188). With respect to the more specific context of children’s literature, in *Harry Potter and International Relations* (2006), International Relations scholars view the Harry Potter series as a “looking-glass” into the debatable issues of group identity and conflict, cultural globalization, secularism and religion. Editors Iver Neumann and Daniel Nexon inquire what children’s literature could teach us about “war, peace, intervention, international trade, transnational movements, and other core concerns in the study of international politics” (p. 1). I am interested in using IR theories to raise questions that would identify ideologies that underpin books that are institutionally recognized as promoting global education and peace. To facilitate an understanding of how these authors create, reproduce or challenge certain models of IR, the next section will briefly overview the dominant schools of thought in International Relations.

**Models of International Relations**

For the purpose of this chapter’s analysis, six schools of thought are relevant: realism, liberalism, interdependence, critical, poststructural theories, and what is referred to as the “cultural turn” in International Relations. With respect to literary and visual analysis, each of these schools raises different questions regarding the relationship between the individual (protagonist)/society/cultural identity/nation and transnational organizations, within the context of war and its effects.

**How do authors narrate the nation?**

The two dominant schools of International Relations are referred to as “realism” and “liberalism.” Since the Renaissance, Western thought on international relations has
been guided by the political realism of Machiavelli and Hobbes, for whom the nation-state is the pre-eminent actor, and national interest, security, and state-power are of primary importance. For realists, IR is the study of power relations between the governments of sovereign states. Ever since John Locke and Immanuel Kant, critics of realism came from the classical liberal tradition. For Kant, the imperative was to achieve “perpetual peace,” and that required the consciousness of individual rights and the notion of a cosmopolitan world community. Kant’s idea of a “pacific federation” ultimately found its implementation in the foundation of the League of Nations and subsequently the United Nations. Liberalism is associated with a focus on international organizations, non-governmental organizations, transnational corporations, and the “universalizing mission of liberal values, such as democracy, capitalism, and secularism” (Dunne, 2005, p. 201). Realists’ riposte was that liberalism discounted the ineluctable necessity of the nation-state in striking a favorable balance of power in the global arena. For this study, realism raises the question: *How do authors narrate the nation?* Liberalism prompts the readers to identify whether supranational organizations offer an antidote to war, how authors evaluate capitalism, and the exclusion or inclusion of religion. The two questions are related. For instance, the United Nations and non-profit organizations appear in many of these books, though often minimized when a national discourse of immigration takes over.

**How do authors regard the benefits or demerits of globalization?**

By the 1970s, interdependence theorists challenged realism’s over-emphasis on the state’s role, and advanced the importance of non-governmental agents such as
multinational corporations. As Scott Burchill observes, “Free trade and the removal of barriers to commerce is at the heart of modern interdependency theory” (1996, p. 36). Interdependence theories point to questions regarding the benefits or demerits of globalization.

**How does an individual’s empowerment come about?**

Often challenging globalization, critical international theorists of the 1980s and 1990s applied critical theory to International Relations. Concerned with persistent exploitation and exclusion, critical theory is associated with Marxism or “the possibility of communities which will replace alienation, exploitation and estrangement with freedom, co-operation and understanding in a world characterized by extraordinary levels of globalization and fragmentation” (Linklater, 1996, p. 141). Critical IR theorists also refuse to associate identity and community with the nation-state. Reviving the Kantian notion of cosmopolitanism, critical theorists like Andrew Linklater shifted the focus from the sovereign state to the universal emancipation of humanity and proposed an inquiry into “the conditions under which emancipation in world politics is possible” (Devetak, 1996, p. 166). For critical IR theorists, the key word is ‘emancipation.’ They claim that political coexistence is linked to socio-economic improvement and the latter cannot occur without the empowerment of individuals and progressive institutions. With respect to national security issues, Critical Security Studies (CSS) argued that states are part of the security problem, rather than a provider of security. Proponents of CSS claim that only through the emancipation of individuals can security be assured (Hobden and Jones, 2005, p.241). Critical IR theorists would thus **investigate how individual emancipation**
comes about. As will be seen in the corpus of books selected, the answer is often education.

**What role does culture play?**

The 1990s saw the entry of culture into International Relations theories. *Culture and International Relations* (Chay, 1990) and *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory* (Lapid and Kratochwil, 1996) are some examples of this trend. The most popular expression of the culture argument was Samuel Huntington’s *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1998). September 11, 2001 brought a new recognition of the importance of cultural identity and religion in world politics. Others argue that this is not a “clash of civilizations” but a symptom of global inequality, world poverty, and social exclusion in poor countries. Eliminating these conditions should therefore be part of global relations. In contrast, Scott Thomas (2005) claims that International Relations theories and policies need to recognize that there is a global resurgence of religion throughout the world, which challenges modern secular governance.

The ensuing analysis is grounded in assumptions related to poststructural IR. Poststructural IR is concerned with textual/visual discursive strategies, the nexus between power/knowledge, and processes of subjectivity. By the late 1980s, poststructural IR theories, influenced by Foucault and Derrida, maintained that international politics requires the privileging of certain discourses and the marginalization or exclusion of others. Deploying Foucault and Jacques Derrida’s deconstruction, Richard Ashley and R.B.J. Walker showed how international relations depend on a dichotomization of international-domestic. Poststructuralists like Michael Shapiro, James Der Derian,
Richard Ashley, and R.B.J. Walker examine how a particular discourse in IR, is embedded in a mutual relationship between power and what Foucault referred to as the “regime of truth” (Devetak, 1996, pp. 179-206). The constitution of the subject emerges from the way the inclusion, exclusion, or opposition of these discourses configures socioeconomic relationships and political possibilities.

**Questioning War**

The overview of International Relations theories yields five questions that will guide the analysis:

- How does the author narrate the nation?
- What is the role of supranational organizations?
- How do authors regard the benefits or demerits of globalization?
- What role does culture play?
- How does an individual’s empowerment come about?

Culture, that amorphous notion that includes religion, belief systems, and social relationships, rears its head again in these books. The question, what role does culture play in global conflict is embraced by Staples and Mortenson, but excluded by Ellis. In *Under the Persimmon Tree* (2005), Staples examines whether or not the United States is fighting a cultural war, just as Deborah Ellis stolidly excludes religion in her narration of the Afghan war. Instead, Ellis forefronts the palliative role of supranational organizations and exposes the inequitable distribution of globalization’s economic merits. As writers of
children’s and adult literature, all these authors are responding to the question, \textit{how does an individual’s empowerment come about?}

\textbf{Under the Persimmon Tree (2005): “My culture will always be with me”}

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\caption{Under the Persimmon Tree (2005)}
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\textit{Under the Persimmon Tree} follows two characters: Nusrat (formerly known as Elaine) who is married to an Afghan and has converted to Islam, and twelve-year-old Najma, an Afghan refugee. The story begins in a village in Northern Afghanistan. The Taliban have taken away Najmah’s father and young brother. Left alone with her pregnant mother, Najmah fends for herself, despite her uncle who is eager to take over their land to grow more poppies. When her mother and baby brother are killed in an air raid, a family takes her to a town bordering Pakistan. Disguised as a boy, she is now Shaheen. Najma sets out to look for her father and brother in Peshawar, Pakistan, since that’s where men go when they don’t want to fight for the Taliban. In the meantime, Elaine, whose Islamic name is Nusrat (meaning help), waits out the war in Peshawar, while her Afghan doctor husband runs a clinic in Mazar-i-Sharif. Nusrat runs a school for Afghan refugee children, under the persimmon tree in her garden. When the American and Mujahideen attacks expel the Taliban from Northern Afghanistan, the Afghan
fighters return to Peshawar to pick up their families, and Nusrat’s students leave, one by one. With no word from her husband, she has to come terms with the harsh reality that Faiz is dead. Najmah’s and Nusrat’s lives intersect when Najmah is brought to The Persimmon Tree School. Najmah’s life takes another turn when she narrowly escapes being seen by her Taliban uncle, who has come to take her back to the village. Nusrat decides that it is time to go back to New York, and that perhaps it would be best for Najmah to accompany her. Miraculously, the head of the refugee camp brings Najmah’s brother, Nur, to the school. Najmah learns that all the men of her village, including her father, were shot. The novel ends with the questions: “How can a woman named Help not return to make peace with her family” and “How can a girl named Star [Najmah] and a boy named Light [Nur] not go back to their land in the shadow of a mountain named to honor their ancestors’ hearts?” (p. 270). It is December, 2001.

_Under the Persimmon Tree_ takes place between October and December 2001. Though Staples offers no additional historical background to the period, it is useful to recall that the story happens during a critical turning point. In October, 2001, the Americans and the UNIFSA (United Front) launched air strikes on the Afghan Taliban. By November, the Taliban lost control of Mazar-i-Sharif, and in December the Bonn Agreement chose Hamid Karzai as the chairman of the interim government. Staples’ narrative time-frame compels readers to wonder what connections are being drawn between cultural identity, Islam, and the conflict in the region. If Islam and the war in Afghanistan are the “nodal points” of discourse in the novel, is their relationship a “clash of civilizations?”
Is it a “clash of civilizations”?

With an even hand, Staples condemns both the American bombing of civilians and the Taliban’s draconian rules that even forbid laughter. As Najmah flees from her village, American jets destroy villages where they think the Taliban are hiding, and the Taliban launch “smaller bombs” (p. 108). Staples does not mask the immorality of war. In Peshawar’s bazaar “People are talking about the Americans dropping bombs on villages, killing innocent families” (p.112). People are injured when picking up the “little yellow bombs,” those unexploded canisters of American cluster bombs, that are “the same color as the food packets, and a similar size” (p. 177). The final irony of war’s indiscriminate conflagration comes when Nusrat’s husband is killed in an “accidental bombing raid” when “Americans had accidentally dropped a bomb on an emergency clinic” in Mazar-i-Sharif (p. 142). Once Mazar-i-Sharif is liberated, there is repeated talk of reconstruction: “People say the Americans will rebuild houses and towns” (p. 153, repeated p. 229). Politically, it is a happy ending. Nations destroy because they have to win the war. But in the end, nations are also the deus ex machina agents of rebuilding nations. Staples combines a Realist’s prioritization of national interests, with a Liberal trust in the palliative measures of international organizations. UN food packets and ration cards are distributed to keep refugees from starving, and Red Crescent aid workers distribute protein wafers. Indeed, literature can seamlessly weave individuals into the politics of nations at war with its ethical duty to rebuild, while not disavowing the role of transnational organizations.

Muslim cultural identity is the nodal point of this novel. In my view, Staples is eager to assuage claims that the American presence in Afghanistan is motivated by
cultural differences. Reflecting the multiculturalism of America and modernity’s fundamental notion of an individual’s choice, Nusrat converts to Islam, not because she married a Muslim. Embracing the idea that cultures and identities are constructed, she describes Islam as her “culture of choice.” So, how does Staples represent Islam, as viewed by a woman who was brought up in Watertown, New York (the author does not mention that it is home to Fort Drum, a military base), and studied mathematics? How does this book frame cross-cultural co-existence, and what are its limitations?

Nusrat explains that she longed for “a poetic and mysterious sense of order” (p. 134), “a sense of order in the universe” (p. 139). “I am a mathematician,” she says, “I need a religion that’s compatible with science and mathematics.” She is particularly moved by the Koran’s references to black holes and the universe’s expansion. Through Nusrat’s reasoning, connections are forged between Islam and modern science. An imam comments that “Islam is the cradle of modern mathematics and astronomy” (p. 137). By charting a “chain of equivalence” between Islam, science and modernity, Staples constructs bridges across cultures and time. Her connections lead to the conclusion that this war is not a “clash of civilizations.” Civilizations have fed off one another, and Islam and modernity share common ground. It is undoubtedly, one way of achieving peaceful global co-existence, though it may confuse religious belief with a culture’s historical contribution to world civilization.

Despite its limitations, this constitutes a different perspective in Staples’ articulation of Muslim culture. In her Shabanu trilogy, Staples was largely concerned with the development of Pakistan, and the relevance of gender issues in its
modernization. Aspiring towards a national model that would reconcile Islamic and American values, it was a discourse that narrated modernity through American-educated Omar and Jameel, who were the embodiment of “hope” for Pakistan’s survival. Under the Persimmon Tree, in contrast, occasions a discussion on what is “modern” in Islam, albeit fixed in the past. This raises questions on the present state of Muslim culture.

The cultural problems presented to the reader are intrinsically linked to those associated with modernity: the secular discourse of science as against religion and superstitions, and gender relationships. When Nusrat tells the children that meteors are not bad omens, she not only teaches them their scientific composition, but appeals to Islam. She explains that the Ka’ba in Mecca was part of a meteorite. When someone objects that talking about the explosion of stars is an un-Islamic idea, Nusrat explains that “It’s neither an Islamic idea nor an un-Islamic one. . . . It’s science” (p. 76). She is at pains to explain that “the Koran has great wisdom about the heavens and how they expand” but people who didn’t know the Koran invented myths to explain what they couldn’t understand (p. 225). For her, scientific reasoning is one way of contesting traditional superstitions. But, she does so by appealing to Islamic traditions. Unlike Gloria Whelan’s opposition of science and Hinduism in Homeless Bird, Staples presents a more complex picture. She seeks intersections between religion and science, while at the same time insisting on the secularism of science.

Staples is also unafraid to answer questions regarding gender relationships in Muslim culture. Nusrat asks her husband how he can reconcile himself to a faith that thinks so poorly of women. He replies, “Faith is only between each person and God” (p.
Faiz’s explanation operates on a distinction between faith and state, between the individual and the socialization and politicization of religion. Faiz goes on to explain that, “Here the news from the Middle East and Afghanistan tells only about Islam fundamentalist fanatics, and so I think non-Muslims don’t believe me at all when I say such things” (p. 136). Nusrat realizes that “moderation, peace, and hope were more characteristic of Islam than the warlike stereotypes she was familiar with” (p. 138). Though Staples’ comment on the discourse of media, acknowledges that even the educated can be ignorant of what they are not exposed to, the author emphatically advances the benefits of education. For Nusrat, “It’s their minds she’s after, for she knows that without some education these children will be lost forever” (p. 76). Education becomes a form of international relations.

For Staples there is a “chain of equivalence”\textsuperscript{14} between literacy, secularism, cross-cultural awareness, and peace education. Peace education necessitates the recognition of a civilization’s contributions, the construction of bridges that connect tradition to modernity’s achievements, and the reluctance to over-generalize representations of

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\textsuperscript{14} According to Laclau and Mouffe (1985), every discourse (including social action) is created by the partial fixation of meaning around these “nodal points” (p.112). A nodal point is a privileged sign, to which other signs are related, either by way of equivalence or difference. This ‘nodal point’ has the power to organize and change the social-discursive field by the kind of relationships charted. Discourse theory analysis, as elaborated by Laclau and Mouffe (1985) refer to this relationship as the “chain of equivalence.”
Muslim society or resort to stereotypes. There is a serious limitation to her model. By reducing war to the abstract power of nations, readers are led to ignore that armies are made of people. By disengaging war from the faces of their perpetrators, the author ironically absolves them of their actions. One forgets that it is the most highly educated who make national declarations and the least educated who are the violent foot soldiers of war.

Whereas Staples appeals to Islamic traditions, in Deborah Ellis’ *Breadwinner Trilogy*, the author’s resolute secular discourse may exclude Islam, but inadvertently leaves room for the icons of Western education. But, whereas Staples’ protagonists were passive participants in a war, Ellis makes her characters much more proactive in their survival and resistance to political forces. It is a sense of empowerment that is akin to critical International Relations.

“Sometimes we are bombed by the Taliban. Sometimes we are bombed by the other side.”

The *Breadwinner Trilogy* is loosely based on Ellis’ *Women of the Afghan War* (2000), a collection of autobiographical vignettes as told by Russian and Afghan women whose lives were caught up in the “decisions made by two super-power governments” (xii). In fact, the trilogy was inspired by the author’s interview of a mother whose daughter was still in Afghanistan, masquerading as a boy in order to feed her family. Ellis donates her royalties to Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan and Street Kids International (Gangi, 2005). The trilogy is a survival, coming-of-age story of two Afghan girls, Parvana and Shauzia, who are displaced by war. Readers are introduced to the repressive Taliban regime in *The Breadwinner*, exposed to the international power struggle in Afghanistan in *Parvana’s Journey*, and bear witness to the eventual outpouring of refugees into Pakistan in *Mud City*. The trilogy spans the history and politics of Afghanistan from the time of the Taliban in the late 1990s, to the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, attack. Each book has an author’s note which gives the historical, political and social context. A glossary explains geographic and cultural terms, as well as organizations such as the Red Crescent and UNHCR (explanations which are absent in Staples). History and references to global politics are always present. Publisher Groundwood Books suggests ages 10 to 14 as the targeted audience. Like *Under the Persimmon Tree*, the publisher does not have an accompanying discussion guide.

*The Breadwinner* (2000) is about life under the Taliban, and the friendship between two girls, Parvana and Shauzia. In accordance with the Taliban edicts that forbid the education of girls, eleven-year-old Parvana can no longer attend school. The novel opens with Parvana and her father in the market, trying to eke out a living by reading and
writing letters for the illiterate. Like Faiz’s parents in *Under the Persimmon Tree*, Parvana’s parents are both university educated. The Taliban put a stop to her mother’s career at a radio station, and her father lost a leg when a bomb destroyed the high school he taught at. Her father’s English education eventually leads to his imprisonment. Left without a male breadwinner, Parvana disguises herself as a boy so that she can freely walk in public. Encouraged by her mother and Mrs. Weera, an ex P.E. teacher, Parvana takes her father’s place in the market. Mrs. Weera organizes a secret school for girls and a clandestine magazine that is printed in Pakistan and smuggled back into Afghanistan. The book ends with the release of Parvana’s father. But by then her mother and siblings have already left for Mazari-e-Sharif, and the Taliban have taken over the city. Parvana and her father set out to look for their family. Though they carry very little, tucked in their backpack and hidden from sight, are her father’s books and copies of the women’s magazine. As they depart, Mrs. Weera calls out,

> Tell your mother that copies are being sent out to women all over the world. She has helped to let the world know what is happening in Afghanistan. Be sure you tell her that. (p. 164)

If the first book was about living under the Taliban regime, *Parvana’s Journey* (2002) follows Parvana on her journey through a blighted land of rubble, despair and treacherous landmines. By the time *Parvana’s Journey* was published in 2002, the Taliban had been removed from power, though Afghanistan was far from stable. The book opens with her father’s death. Starving and all alone, she sets out on a journey to find her mother. Parvana also begins to maintain a diary addressed to her friend Shauzia. Along the way, she rescues a baby boy Hassan, tames wild Asif who lost a leg to a
landmine, and rescues young Leila, who lives with her bedridden grandmother in a valley surrounded by landmines. There, in their “Green Valley” the children settle down for a short while. Parvana teaches Leila to read, and even grandmother listens. A bomb puts an abrupt end to that. Once more, the band of children set off on their quest for Parvana’s family. Eventually, starvation drives the children to despair. Tearing out the pages of her father’s book, they chew on it. It is Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The novel ends with Parvana in a refugee camp for Internally Displaced Persons. Parvana’s last entry in her diary is a letter to Shauzia, promising that “One way or another, I’ll get to France, and I’ll be waiting for you at the top of the Eiffel Tower, less than twenty years from now” (p. 194).

While *Parvana’s Journey* took the reader through rural Afghanistan, *Mud City* (2003) is based in urban and suburban Peshawar, Pakistan. *Mud City* is primarily Shauzia’s story. She is an enterprising girl who is determined to earn the money it takes to accomplish her dream of visiting the lilac fields of France. The novel begins and ends with life in the Widows’ Compound of a refugee camp. In this last novel, Shauzia leaves the refugee camp, and ventures into the dangerous streets of Peshawar, motivated by her resolve to make enough money to go to France. During her wanderings in Peshawar, Shauzia enjoys the brief generosity of an American family, cleans the butcher’s shop, carries bundles at the train station, joins a band of children who earn money picking trash, and narrowly escapes being a victim of the organ trade. The trilogy concludes with Mrs. Weera bravely accompanying nurses back to Afghanistan, where once again the people are being bombed. Except this time, it is an American attack. We are told that,
“They are angry about what happened in New York City.” Looking at a photograph of the Twin Towers, Shauzia comments, “Looks like Kabul” (pp. 149-150).

For the time being, Shauzia has to postpone her plans of going to France. “She had almost twenty years before she had to meet her friend Parvana at the top of the Eiffel Tower in Paris. She’d get there. But first she had a little job to do” (p. 158).

**Transnational organizations and women’s movements.**

Ellis is not of the Realist camp of IR theories. She shares a critical international theorists’ view that nation-states are the perpetrators of conflict, and offers a Liberal model of international relations, in which supranational organizations mitigate the outcome of war. As a character in *Parvana’s Journey* says, “Sometimes we are bombed by the Taliban. Sometimes we are bombed by the other side” (p. 11). At the end of *Parvana’s Journey*, Parvana and her friends arrive in a refugee camp. She is welcomed by a Red Crescent nurse, baby Hassan is cared for by a French relief agency, and food is provided by The World Food Program. Similarly, *Mud City*, the last book in the trilogy, ends with Shauzia in a refugee camp for Internally Displaced Persons. The tents are “proper tents made of white canvas with UNHCR stamped on the side in big black letters” (p. 146), the United Nations makes water pumps, and aid agencies provide food.

Ellis counters the virtues of globalization touted by Interdependence IR theorists, who promote the free market internationalization of trade and believe that multinational corporations are key actors in international politics. Globalization supporters claim that the wealth generated through international commercial networks will have a beneficial “trickle down” effect that would alleviate poverty. Through Shauzia’s adventures in Peshawar, Ellis
scrutinizes economic inequity, multinational corporations and the cushy expatriate world of foreigners. During her escapades in Peshawar, Shauzia lands in the “other” suburbia: the affluent neighborhood of the foreign expatriates. Ever the entrepreneur, Shauzia quickly realizes that leftovers from the trash bins of palatial five-star hotels can make a fine dinner, and begging from the “after-Church-pizza Westerners” is more lucrative, especially outside the Chief Burger restaurant in an expatriate neighborhood. For Shauzia, the only “trickle down” effect of globalization is begging and garbage pickings. Ellis demonstrates the economic inequities in a multinational world-system that disregards the marginalized.

Ellis also shares critical International Relations theory’s emphasis on empowerment. Her novels are primarily concerned with feminist grassroots movements. Mrs. Weera embodies the feminist dimension of IR, which argues that “women are significant activists in critical social movements, organizing for peace, environmental justice and women’s liberation transnationally” (True, 1996, p. 223). Reflecting the Revolutionary Association of Women in Afghanistan (RAWA), which fights for women’s rights, Mud City begins with a scene at the Widows’ Compound in a refugee camp outside Peshawar.

Not only was this the office for the Widows’ Compound, the section of the refugee camp where widows and their children lived. It was also the office for a secret women’s organization that operated on the other side of the Pakistan border in Afghanistan. The Taliban were still in power there. Mrs. Weera’s organization ran secret schools, clinics, and a magazine. (p. 9)

Politically, Ellis advocates a cosmopolitan model of international relations. Ever the anti-war activist, Ellis has no national allegiance when it comes to violence. This Canadian author is not concerned with the role of the Canadian abroad. Her approach to
global cosmopolitanism is best summed up in Dower and Williams’ (2002) description of it as a “robust form of global ethic” which “provides a critical framework for assessing the foreign policy of states and is in contrast to internationalism which stresses the norms of respecting sovereignty and observing established international law, and skeptical realism which questions the relevance of ethics” (p. xx).

Unlike authors Rukhsana Khan and Staples, though Ellis grapples with economic and political complexities, she purposefully eludes cultural and religious references. Except for the family eating “afghan style” or references to the burqa, the reader comes away with little cultural background. It is, however, fair to mention that in an interview with David Freeman, when asked if the political situation in Afghanistan had anything to do with religion, she replied,

No, that’s something that women told me over and over again – that the Taliban do not represent Islam. And in writing the book I steered away from Islam as I know nothing about it and I didn’t want it to be the issue. I wanted the war and repression to be the issue. (Freeman, 2002)

Like Staples, Ellis does not share Huntington’s famous prediction that in a post-Cold War world, culture and religion will spark a “clash of civilizations” (Huntington, 1996). However, Ellis’ deliberate exclusion of religion and cultural detail inadvertently leads the reader to equate Afghan culture with the Taliban’s enforced norms. As Foucault points out, a discourse is always constituted by the relationships it excludes. I argue that by excluding Muslim culture, Ellis makes way for a discourse on the benefits of Western culture and education, and leaves unaddressed the diversity within Islam and Afghanistan. It is an important observation, especially since the insertion of Western cultural icons complicates the otherwise expansive stance of cosmopolitanism and her
condemnation of war and economic inequities. Ellis’ work provides an example of how plot and style naturalize the exclusion of Muslim culture, through a specific narrative point-of-view which limits discourse.

Stephens (1992) notes that the perspective provided by a focal character imposes subject positions from which the text will be read (p. 27). To begin with, Parvana’s family is clearly educated. The family speaks English, her mother was a professional, her sister planned on attending a teacher’s college, and her father is imprisoned because he was educated in England. Apart from the obvious reference to the Taliban’s crackdown on Western culture, Ellis’s repeated references to an English education raise some prickly questions regarding the “chains of equivalence” drawn between Western education and self-empowerment. Is emancipatory education the prerogative of the Western-educated? Or, is the book’s audience identified as exclusively North American? Without taking away from the context of the repressive Taliban, Jo Lampert’s scathing review of The Breadwinner is pertinent:

Parvana and her siblings are also substitute Westerners. She is often confused by what she sees around her (women in burqas), totally befuddled by the politics of war, naïve about the circumstances in her own country. The only reason she knows about land mines is because someone from the United Nations once came into her class to talk about them (167). Even her father seems totally bemused by Afghani politics. ‘I don’t know why they arrested me. How should I know why they let me go?’ (162). (2002, p. 51)

One might counter argue that Ellis’ stance is not ideological, but merely reflects how the educated Afghan middle class was displaced by the war. Additionally, as a narrative focalizer, Parvana and her urban westernized family enable the reader to adopt a not so alien “subject position” from which to view the characters and events. Reader
relevance can, however, be problematic. Trites (2000) remarks that the author/narrator’s assumptions about what its readers know is “the crucible in which ideology is smelted” (p. 73). Intertextual references are examples of textual gaps that can affect how a novel influences readers’ attitudes (Stephens, 1992). On her journey through war-torn Afghan countryside, Parvana and her friends are starving. As a last resort they chew the pages of *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The symbolism cannot go unnoticed; survival means ingesting an American curricular icon of social justice and transformation.

It is unfortunate that in condemning the Taliban’s oppression of women and education, Ellis locates a woman’s and child’s agency in Western markers that engage a North American reader, thereby creating a wider chasm between “us” and “them.” The binaries of modernity (English education) as against a selective representation of tradition (the *burqa* and *chador* being the sartorial symbol), immediately raise the suspicion of a Western liberal modernity, that denies agency to the cultural other. Susan Louise Stewart would disagree. In her article “Beyond Borders: Reading “Other” Places in Children’s Literature,” she writes of *Parvana’s Journey*: “This is no Cinderella story. Rather, it is the story of a young girl trying to survive in a ravaged country at war with itself, and towards the end of the text, the U.S. A novel of this nature would be ripe for constructing the other through easy binaries, but Ellis refrains” (2008, p. 101).

The trilogy concludes with Shauzia’s deferred dream of a reunion in Paris. It is disconcerting that in spite of her critique of economic and gender inequities, the blind violence of war (“collateral damage”), and the plight of refugees, Ellis’s choice of Paris
leaves little hope for the rehabilitation of Afghanistan. Exodus remains the only possible end to the misery of civilian life caught between many wars.

The picture book *Four Feet, Two Sandals* (2007) by Karen Williams and Khadra Mohammed is also concerned with the impact of the wars in Afghanistan on families and children, even though it is written for a younger audience (publisher Eerdmam suggests ages 7 – 10). How does a picture book differ?

*Four Feet, Two Sandals* (2007): “We will share again in America.”

Karen Lyn Williams is the author of several picture books. In her first children’s book, *Galimoto* (1990), she was inspired by her experiences in Malawi as a Peace Corps volunteer. *Circles of Hope* (2005) is inspired by her stay in rural Haiti. Recently, she has collaborated with Khadra Mohammed, who is currently the Executive Director of The Pittsburgh Refugee Center. They have co-authored two books on refugee children: *My Name is Sangoel* (2009), about a Sudanese refugee boy who struggles to feel at home in America, and *Four Feet, Two Sandals* (2007). *Four Feet, Two Sandals* was inspired by a refugee girl who asked Khadra Mohammed why there were no books about children like her. Illustrator Doug Chayka, is also known for his cover art for the journal, “The Nation.”

When relief workers bring used clothing to the refugee camp, everyone scrambles to grab whatever they can. After two years of going barefoot, ten-year-old Lina is thrilled when she finds a sandal that fits her foot perfectly. Unfortunately, another girl, Feroza, has the matching shoe. “What good is one sandal for two feet?” asks Feroza. Lina solves the problem by suggesting, “You wear them today, and I will wear them tomorrow.”
Four feet, two sandals.” As the girls go about their daily routines - washing clothes in the river and waiting in long lines for water - the sandals bond their friendship. When Lina is lucky enough to leave for America, each of them keeps one sandal. The book ends with the promise, “We will share again in America.”

Karen Williams has a teacher’s guide on her web page (Appendix J). The thematic section suggests discussion questions regarding friendship, sharing, loss, separation, and refugees. Activities include a henna painting activity, researching on the history of refugees around the world, the geography of Afghanistan and Pakistan, and learning more about Islam.

Considering the high semantic and semiotic density of picture books that are limited to 32 pages, decoding how the text-image relationship is embedded with political, social, economic, and cultural discourses can render valuable information. Additionally, educators are made aware that even picture books can offer readers a certain “real world understanding” of international relations and transnational organizations (Kiefer, 1988, p. 280).
Immigrating to a “safe haven” nation.

The picture on the cover both explains the title and extends the story of the foregrounded protagonists with a complementary discourse on Afghan society and living conditions in refugee camps (see Figure 25). According to Nikolajeva and Scott (2001, pp. 12), the relationship between text and image in picture books are of various types. It can be symmetrical (redundant), complementary (filling each other’s gaps), enhancing (text and image support each other), or sylleptic (mutually independent). *Four Feet, Two Sandals* is an example of a complementary and enhancing relationship between text and image.

Applying Kress and van Leeuwen’s (1996) visual grammar and David Lewis’ (2001, p. 149) analysis of props and artifacts as a realization of setting (p. 149), enables readers to decode a complementary visual narrative on poverty and international organizations. The two main characters, Lina and Feroza, are always offset by a world of activity, as represented by tools and receptacles. The cover has three props present throughout the book: the tents, diverse clothing for women and children, and various containers such as buckets, baskets and pans. These deliberately recurring motifs should
be interrogated by educators, in order to understand their symbolism and accompanying issues. By linking these visual elements to the text, it is possible to read the book through the perspectives of international relations, poverty, and cultural representations.

Life in a refugee camp is visually transmitted to the reader through the absence of concrete buildings and the lack of amenities. All the utilities are easily moved, as are the baskets, pans, and the jerry cans and buckets which are used for fetching water from the well (see Figure 26). Thus the background of displacement can prompt student discussions which are differentiated by the status of refugees fleeing from their homeland.

Figure 26: “Lina went to do the washing, wearing one beautiful sandal.”

Taking into account Lewis’ observation that “various kinds of artefacts and tools” are indicative of “circumstances of means” (2001, p. 149), background details inform the young reader of the economic conditions in refugee camps. Visuals also fill in an unwritten social commentary on gender, i.e. only the women and girls are portrayed doing the household chore of washing clothes. This gendered discourse is textually
supported in the double-page that shows boys in a school, and the girls practicing their names on the dirt outside (see Figure 27).

Figure 27: “The girls practiced their names in the dirt”

We are told that “When they did not have work to do, Lina and Feroza crept up to the windows of the school and peeked inside. The school was small with only enough room for the boys to study.” Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) observe that social interaction is conveyed by spatial vectors in the layout, as demonstrated in this particular picture, where the school is not the primary focus. Instead, education is among many other daily survival activities - fetching water and pushing a wheelbarrow.

The visuals also debunk the misconception that all Afghan women wear burkhas. Some women wear burkhas, others wear long skirts, and the text mentions that girls wear shalwar-kameez (traditional shirts and trousers). The portrayal of different types of women’s clothing (see Figure 28) indicates a cultural diversity, ignored in the teaching guide. Instead, the author’s teaching guide poses a question which draws the reader’s attention to the girls’ head covers: “Lina and Feroza must keep their heads covered with a scarf when they are in public. Why do you think this is important in their religion and
culture?” (Appendix J). There is, of course, a notable exclusion in the question; almost all the characters cover their heads, irrespective of gender or age. A more inclusive (and factual) question would have also led to considerations of climate. The question then goes on to ask readers to “Try wearing a scarf or head cover for a day. How did it feel?” Going beyond a de-contextualized empathetic experience would mean inviting readers to probe how cultural practice and experience shape one’s assumptions by asking, “Do you think Lina and Feroza would feel the same way as you do?”

Figure 28: “used clothing off the back of a truck”

The depiction of religion and religious rituals is presented in the text, but not in the visuals. In the text, it is the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan. The authors write, “In the evening the sky turned deep blue and the first stars began to sparkle. Lina and Feroza watched for the sliver of the crescent moon that signaled the beginning of Ramadan. They shared memories and whispered their dreams for a new home.”
A discourse analysis of text-image is concerned with the relationship between textual and visual elements. Here, the picture illustrates the girls’ sharing of dreams, rather than looking at the crescent moon, which would have been an explicit visual orientation towards religion (see Figure 29). Why is religion textually coupled with an individual’s memories and dreams for the future, but decoupled from visual display, in a culture where daily prayers are an integral part of daily life, and in a book where the illustrator meticulously depicts other activities of life in a refugee camp? True, refugee conditions and hope are the book’s central themes, and not culture. Yet, the role of secularism in modernity may be at play in this separation of the public and private, in which religion is part of a person’s private life.

Despite being a picture book for younger readers, the authors do not shy away from explicitly mentioning war and death. Lina tells her friend, “My father and sister were killed in the war.” Nor do the authors excise fear. The authors’ note at the end of the book explains that “People who flee their country because of fear of persecution are called refugees.” The factors that lead to the status of refugees are also addressed in the teaching guide. Students are asked, “What are some of the reasons that someone becomes a refugee?
What can you share with the refugees in your community?” The conclusion of the book shows Lina and her mother preparing to leave for America. A “relief worker” gives her mother a white bag with all her important papers (see Figure 30). The bag is also shown on Williams’ teaching guide, with the caption, “White bag refugees carry with them” (Appendix J). On the bag there is a number and the acronym IOM, for the International Organization for Migration. While the blue uniforms in the picture obliquely refer to the IOM (a UN organization), it is excluded in the text and author’s note. Similarly, the teaching guide omits the role of global organizations such as IOM. Pedagogical inclusion of these transnational organizations as the enablers of identity transformation from victims of war, to refugees, to citizens of other nation-states is key to understanding that these organizations are an integral part of international relations.

Figure 30: “All of your important papers are in this bag”

There is, instead, an emphasis on “America” as the place where the girls’ friendship will continue, and the two slippers will meet again. Like Ellis, here too, friendship is deferred to a meeting in the West. It would appear that in this modern-day rendition of Cinderella’s slipper, happiness is associated with a national discourse on the West as a land
where dreams are fulfilled. Poststructuralist IR theorists would remind us that meaning making depends on oppositional differences. Lene Hansen (1997) observes that “the picture of international relations as a domain of violence . . . depends on a picture of the national political community as characterized by order, progress and peaceful resolutions of conflict” (p. 317). In fact, in this book, America is referred to as a “safe haven.” Notwithstanding the truth behind such a statement, the book’s conclusion endorses Realism’s view that ultimately it is the nation that protects and provides security. This narration of nation is even more pronounced in the next book, Farah Ahmedi’s *The Story of My Life: an Afghan Girl on the Other Side of the Sky* (2005). Ahmedi recounts her childhood in war-torn Afghanistan, her flight to Pakistan as a refugee and ultimately her arrival in America. Publisher Simon & Schuster does not have an accompanying teaching guide. It is categorized as a young adult book.

*The Story of My Life: an Afghan Girl on the Other Side of the Sky* (2005): “Why is my country like this?”

"The other side of the sky" is a reference to the author’s childhood dream. As an elementary school student in Kabul, Afghanistan, in the early 1990s, she imagined
climbing to the sky on a ladder because she wondered what was on the other side. Farah Ahmedi’s memoir was named the winner of a nationwide contest in which Americans were invited to submit their life stories so that one could be selected for publication. The contest was sponsored by the ABC program "Good Morning, America," and publisher Simon and Schuster. Farah was then teamed with professional writer Tamim Ansary to produce a book-length manuscript. At the time, she was a seventeen year old junior in a high school outside Chicago. Tamim Ansary is an Afghan-American writer. On his Web page, Ansary states, “Farah told me her story over the course of five days this January. I then translated the tapes of those interviews into English and rendered them into a book.” His recent books include *Destiny Disrupted: A History of the World through Islamic Eyes* (2009), and his memoir, *West of Kabul, East of New York* (2003). His children’s books include the Afghani folktale, *Gulmamadak the Great* (2006).

Farah Ahmedi was crippled by a land-mine at the age of seven. After a long wait, a German relief organization arranges to fly her out of the country. During her two years in Germany, she learns to walk with prosthetic legs and returns with a keen awareness of life “on the other side of the sky.” As the confrontation between the Taliban and the Mujahideen reaches its peak, Farah loses her father and sisters to a rocket attack. With Kabul now under the Taliban (1996), her two brothers flee to Pakistan. She would never see them again. Alone, mother and daughter also decide to leave for Pakistan. There they live as refugees in a United Nations camp. Conditions are deplorable. Afraid that winter in the camp will prove fatal for her mother’s asthma, she decides to find a job as a domestic servant. Bereft of any will to survive, the turning point comes when she
“surrender(s) to Allah. . . . And with that surrender, a change began” (p. 132). Finally, thanks to Farah’s perseverance, mother and daughter are accepted by World Relief, a Christian organization that had agreed to sponsor a thousand Afghans. Life in a Chicago suburb is not easy, except for the friendship and support of Alyce. Farah recounts her cultural alienation, her mother’s physical and emotional trials, and life in a U.S. high school as a refugee ESL student. Throughout the book, Farah always remembers the “unexpected stranger” who has helped her, especially her dear American friend Alyce. As she says,

> Whatever my story means, this is part of it too. Again and again - even though this world is filled with such indifference and much random cruelty - at a crucial moment some good person has crossed my path and taken the trouble to care about me. (p. 62)

Individual agency, as illustrated by Farah’s indomitable spirit, faith in Allah’s compassion and the humanitarian ethos of global citizens sees her through.

* Nations provide education, health, security, and fulfill dreams.*

Farah Ahmedi’s memoir echoes many of the themes addressed so far: war, human rights, poverty, displaced adolescents, the impoverished conditions in refugee camps, exploitation of servants, immigration, death, loss, faith, friendship, resilience, dreams and hope. Ahmedi’s memoir offers a lucid trajectory on the development of a child’s political consciousness. In the analysis of Ellis’ trilogy, I had noted how the use of a focal character imposes subject positions from which the text will be read (Stephens, 1992). Children, especially, are not privy to the power struggles at times of war. Farah
Ahmedi was born in 1987, at a time when the Mujahideen was battling the Soviets. She recalls that as a child,

> Sometimes we saw planes streaking overhead, but no one told us children where they were going or what they were doing. To us, they were just something to clap at in delight. (p. 27)

Her political innocence ends as the war engulfs her own life. Soon after her father and sisters are killed in a rocket attack, the Taliban take over Kabul. Farah comments, “I do remember the day the Taliban actually entered Kabul. My shock and confusion had lifted enough to let the bigger world into my consciousness” (p. 93). She was nine. She was also a girl, and a member of the persecuted Hazara ethnic minority. It is noteworthy that Farah’s political awareness of a government’s responsibilities develops during her two year stay in Germany. It is then that she realizes that “as far as I could tell, my homeland was an empty, barren country” (p. 71). She asks herself, “Why is my country like this?” (italics in original, p. 72). Her long ordeal as a victim of war, and then as a refugee gives her an acute awareness of what a government owes its citizenry. When the Embassy official asks her why she wants to go the United States, Farah replies:

> I want to go to America so I can get an education and make something of my life. . . . My missing leg is a problem. I think we can get better medical treatment in America. That’s another reason I want to go – but mostly because I want to have a life. (p. 148)

For Farah, hope lies in a nation’s contractual promise to provide its citizenry at least three primary needs: life, health, and an education. It is only as a new immigrant in the United States that she realizes the need for cultural belonging. The book concludes with Farah’s plea for acceptance, “We want to join American culture, but American
culture has to let us in” (p. 227). Farah’s comment provokes an important conversation on what is/are American culture(s), and whether it is porous to the multicultural kinetics of immigrant cultures, or remains a multicultural mosaic. This discussion, however, remains limited to a concern with national and not global models of multicultural coexistence. Pointing to this weakness, some cosmopolitans argue that since multiculturalism is trapped in national outlooks on cultural identity, it is an inadequate framework for dealing with differences that go beyond national boundaries (Beck and Cronin, 2006, pp. 66-67). In the next book, a cosmopolitan model of global activism is proffered in Greg Mortenson’s young reader’s edition of his 2006 bestseller *Three Cups of Tea*.

**Three Cups of Tea: One Man’s Journey to Change the World. . . . One Child at a Time** (2009): “Better schools in Afghanistan and Pakistan would leave the United States more secure.”

at a Time (2006). At the author’s request, the paperback’s subtitle was changed to One Man’s Mission to Promote Peace. . . . One School at a Time (2006). Jane Goodall’s comment in her foreword to the young reader’s version of Three Cups of Tea sums up Mortenson’s mission: “this contributes more to world peace than misguided attempts to change the world through violence and war” (p. xvii).

The young reader’s edition of Three Cups of Tea includes a map, timeline, glossary, a who’s who, an interview with Greg’s daughter Amira, several color photographs, and a discussion guide. According to the publisher, its target audience is 8 to 12-year-olds. Online, both books are supported by The Pennies for Peace Curriculum Resource Guide which is aligned with national standards in language arts, social studies, and mathematics for grades 4 to 8. This curriculum resource guide was developed by the Central Asian Institute (founded by Mortenson), the National Education Association, and the Pearson Foundation.

Although written in the third person and co-written with David Relin, Three Cups of Tea: One Man’s Journey to Change the World. . . . One Child at a Time is an autobiographical account of the adventures and challenges Mortenson encounters in his attempt to establish schools (especially for girls) in Pakistan and Afghanistan. When his sister Christa died in 1992, he decided to place her amber necklace on the summit of K2, in the Karakoram Range in East Pakistan. After a near-death experience, two porters took Greg to Korphe, a village that is cut-off from the bigger towns by the Braldu River. There, he convalesced in chief Haji Ali’s house. In recognition of their hospitality and compassion, Mortenson promised to build the children a school. Korphe had no school
building and a teacher cost the village a dollar a day. The most the villagers could afford was three days a week. On his return to the United States, Mortenson successfully persuaded Jean Hoerni, a Silicon Valley scientist, mountaineer and philanthropist, to donate 12,000 dollars for the school project. During the next three years, Mortenson built a bridge, school, and a women’s vocational center in Korphe. The seeds of the Central Asian Institute (CAI) were sown. Before his death, Hoerni donated a million dollars to the foundation. During the next 16 years, Greg Mortenson and the foundation would fully or partially support 131 schools in Pakistan (including some for displaced refugees), and in war-torn Afghanistan. The account is not without a sense of adventure. In 2003 he scuttled the bullets of two sparring Afghan opium warlords, and has withstood threats from Islamic clerics and Americans. The book takes its title from a Balti proverb:

    The first time you share tea with a Balti, you are a stranger. The second time you take tea, you are an honored guest. The third time you share a cup of tea, you become family, and for our family, we are prepared to do anything, even die. (Mortenson & Relin, 2009, p. 79)

Indeed, *Three Cups of Tea* is about how to become part of a global family over and above cultural differences and political turmoil. It is a cosmopolitan model of global citizenship that showcases how individuals, communities, and non-profit organizations can bring about this change. In contrast to Ellis’ model of secular cosmopolitanism, Mortenson acknowledges the importance of cultural tradition and religion in global interaction. In the following section, I examine the nexus between cross-cultural awareness, education, and international relations.
Education as politics by other means.

So far, I have investigated the textual and visual discourse on development, human rights and international relations. Mortenson’s book illustrates how social action also articulates discourse, in so far as it is a certain way of relating to the world and enacting understanding of it (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 113). As a discourse, social actions also revolve around nodal points. In Three Cups of Tea, education serves as the ‘nodal point,’ with the promise that “education means hope” (p. 208). The author goes further in his effort to highlight the role of educators by acknowledging his gratitude to “all the teachers all over the world, who dedicate their lives to education” and librarians who “help guide us with access to knowledge and information.” In the reading guide, students are asked to make a list of their future plans, noting “how education plays a role in achieving some or all of your goals” (p. 208). For Mortenson, education is a transnational “action” of the global citizen that can empower individuals, and deter the very cause of conflict between nations.

Education is related to cross-cultural awareness, global citizenship, American security, and conflict resolution. Contrary to expectations, this is not only a book about educating Pakistani and Afghan children. It is also about educating the American reader. There is, however, a difference in perspective, depending on whether one views the book as a text addressed to readers in the U.S., as a comment on educating Pakistani and Afghan children, or as an account of the author’s own learning curve.

What role does culture play? From the perspective of American readers, the young reader’s edition is seen as an educational tool for learning about other cultures, and global
citizenship. In the introduction, Mortenson directly addresses his readers, hoping that his story will inspire them to read and learn about children who live in other countries and have “different cultures, faiths, and traditions.” Indeed, Mortenson’s own effort to surmount cultural differences becomes a model lesson for the reader. Significantly, the book begins with the Muslim greeting “As-salaam alaikum! Peace be with you!” Knowledge of languages, Islam, and local cultural practices is not only central to his success, but his very survival. Kidnapped by smugglers in Waziristan, he asks for a Koran and prays five times a day in the Muslim way, an act which probably saved him. His ease with local customs endears him to mullahs and Afghan warlords. But most of all, Mortenson learns the basic rules of engaging with other cultures: “to slow down and make building relationships is as important as building projects” (p. 79). He follows his mentor Haji Ali’s advice that, “If you want to thrive in Baltistan, you must respect our ways” (p. 79).

Though Haji Ali’s comment highlights the importance of cultural engagement in global relations, the strong modal verb, “you must” opens up problems that inhere in cross-cultural interaction, especially with respect to the limits of cultural adaptation. This is brought out in a lesson on “The Cultural Effect” in the Pennies for Peace Curriculum (pp. 20-21). Students are asked to discuss:

How does our own culture shape us and influence our behavior? When is it appropriate to act in a way outside of cultural norms? Is it appropriate to ask others to act outside of their cultural norms?

The series of questions explores how cultural differences can be problematic, but not before establishing the premise that “various cultures contribute to the richness of our global community.” The problem with cultural differences is then framed within the
overarching notion of a global community: “How do cultural differences cause problems in our global community? How might those problems be overcome?” (p. 21). The idea of a “global community” is reiterated in the curriculum’s lesson on “Effective Global Citizens” which poses debatable questions: “Whose responsibility is it to care about the greater good? Individuals? Communities? Organizations? Governments? All? None?” (p. 24). A mapping of the questions in the curriculum guide reveals a progression from self/us (“our own culture”), the contributions and problematic differences in “other” cultures, to the notion of an overarching global community. The text and its guide propose that we cannot care about “the greater good” of humanity’s emancipation and empowerment, nor can we avoid conflicts, without acknowledging that cultural differences need to be recognized and overcome. We need to reflect on our assumptions, and acquire a consciousness of other perspectives. These contingencies echo global education’s paradigm of what constitutes a ‘global perspective.’

Mortenson’s actions, the text, and curriculum guide (Pennies for Peace) all point to a confluence of three interrelated discourses: human rights (as in the social right to an education), multicultural, and global education. This multi-dimensional approach reflects recent pedagogical developments, demonstrated in works such as *Democracy and Diversity: Principles and Concepts for Educating Citizens in a Global Age* (Banks et al., 2005). In chapter 2, I described this “cosmopolitan” manifesto as the meeting ground of multiculturalism and global education that provided a concentric model of citizenship, proceeding from one’s own cultural and national identification towards global
identification. This model is reflected in Mortenson’s actions, the text, and the curriculum guide.

If educating the largely Western reader is grounded in the _ethics_ of one’s responsibilities and actions (students consider the “the cause and effect of our actions as global citizens”), educating the Afghan and Pakistani has a _political_ function. Educating the children of Afghanistan and Pakistan is not only seen as a way out of poverty, but as a possible solution to America’s problems. Mortenson declares, “Ignorance breeds hatred, and the simplest way to stop that is to educate kids” (pp. xxi-xxii). In a post 9/11 world, education would make these children less of a prey for terrorists. Mortenson concludes that “Better schools in Afghanistan and Pakistan would leave the United States more secure” (p. 138). In the curriculum guide, students of grades 6 to 8 are asked to write a persuasive essay, for or against, the statement, “Ultimately the war on terror will be won with books not bombs” (p. 11). They are asked to comment on Mortenson’s statement that,

The difference between becoming a good local citizen and a terrorist could be an education.” Do you agree or disagree? How so? Does Mortenson’s statement apply to citizens in the U.S. as well? How so? (p. 17)

In short, as Foucault reminds us, knowledge is political. Knowledge is enmeshed in relations of power, since it shapes subjectivity, social practice and interaction in international relations.

Politics and talk of war/peace are absent from the lesson plan for younger students (grades 4 to 6). Students are asked to brainstorm themes of the novel (perseverance, humanitarianism, cooperation, sacrifice, education, compassion, global citizenship, etc.). The global education of younger students aims at character education (perseverance,
cooperation, etc.) and a citizenship model of rights (education) and responsibilities (global citizenship), while older students (grade 6 onwards) are confronted with open-ended questions that demand critical thinking and an evaluation of opposing perspectives.

Irrespective of differences in the purpose of educating the American and the Afghan or Pakistani, or the developmental variations in how texts are approached, education is viewed as an antidote to conflict. Mortenson writes that “If we truly want a legacy of peace for our children, we need to understand that this is a war that will ultimately be won with books, not with bombs” (pp. 142-143). The title of his most recent book, *Stones into Schools: Promoting Peace with Books not Bombs* (2009) reaffirms this belief. In this sense, Mortenson’s discourse on education proposes a model of peace education that satisfies the precepts of critical international theory’s emphasis on emancipation, and Liberalism’s cosmopolitan leanings. Even so, Mortenson’s coupling of knowledge, ethics, and politics, is directly related to Foucault’s concern with the synapses between knowledge, power, institutions, discourse, and the construct of the Self. Foucault’s view on education merits quotation:

> Every educational system is a political means of maintaining or of modifying the appropriation of discourse, with the knowledge and the powers it carries with it. (Foucault, 1972, p. 227)

Thus, while educating the Afghan or Pakistani girl is guided by ethical and humanitarian values, it is not devoid of national political ends, even if through more pacific means. And if Mortenson proposes that education is a fulcrum that balances the often opposing poles of ethics and politics, its balancing point could be destabilized by what it excludes. It becomes apparent that Mortenson does not mention what this
education comprises of. It is interesting that his reference to 9/11 and terrorists ignores the fact that the perpetrators were “educated.”

The picture book rendering, *Listen to the Wind: the Story of Dr. Greg & Three Cups of Tea* (2009), focuses on Mortenson’s life-changing experience in Korphe and the building of the bridge and school. In this book for younger readers (6 to 8 years old), there is a developmentally appropriate emphasis on education as a means to community building.

*Listen to the Wind: The Story of Dr. Greg & Three Cups of Tea* (2009): “We are the children of Korphe. Can you hear our voices?”

*Listen to the Wind* is told through the collective voices of the children of Korphe. The book begins and ends with their proclamation, “We are the children of Korphe.” Susan L. Roth’s multi-layered collages of colorful fabrics and paper evoke a child’s art, while offering many details for the observer. The images extend the text with geographical and cultural information. The Karakoram mountain range looms in the background and the girls wear colorful head scarves. The doublespread “Artist’s Note”
explains how Susan Roth selected the designs that frame the collage illustrations and the
text. Roth included designs from ancient Buddhist wooden carvings of that area,
traditional bird sculptures, Balti talismans, and even computer chips (picked from tourist
debris) that she discovered sewn into a Balti woman’s hat. At the end of the book, “A
Korphe Scrapbook” is replete with maps, photos of the children, their school, and the key
people mentioned in the book.

Picture books tell three stories: the textual, visual, and the fusion of the two.
Because of the characteristic sparseness and simplicity of texts for younger children, the
pictures inevitably convey an enhancing contextual story. The following analysis of text-
image investigates how picture books for the very young and their teaching guides differ
when presenting cultural differences and social inadequacies in the world.

**Building communities and fostering citizenship.**

*Listen to the Wind*, is told through the voices of the children of Korphe. The
children’s point of view reinforces a subject position from which the text will be read,
lends authenticity, empowers the children, and engages the audience in a direct
conversation. While the book narrates Greg Mortenson’s recovery in Korphe and his
promise to build a school, the text and images relating to the building of the bridge and
school, emphasize community spirit:

> Our mothers carried water to mix the cement. The men began to lay the stones for
> our classroom walls. . . With our small fingers we wedged tiny slivers of stones
> into the cement to make the walls stronger.

> Every person’s participation in building the school points to an underpinning
> message that social and economic amelioration comes about through a sense of collective
agency and collaboration. The repeated use of “we” further emphasizes collective action that links individuals to their community. The curriculum guide echoes the value of civic responsibility when students are asked: “What are some examples of teamwork from this story? How are the characters good citizens? What are some things you can do to be a good citizen?” (p. 11). The text-image and curriculum therefore work towards locating the reader in the subject position of one who can recognize (examples in the story), evaluate (how are characters good citizens) and enact (what you can do) “good citizenship” in the self, text, and world.

*Listen to the Wind* highlights the importance of education and community building. The book begins and ends with a text-image of children with paper and pencils (see Figures 34 and 35). On the first page there is a succinct description of Korphe’s location “in the mountains of Pakistan,” and their self-sustaining economy:

> Our families grow and gather the food we eat. Our mothers weave and sew the clothes we wear. We make up our games, and we make our own toys.

It is indicative that the text’s fore-fronting of the geographic and social setting is in tandem with the fact-based social studies lessons in the curriculum unit. Students locate Pakistan on the map, and consider the similarities and differences between their lives, and the children of Khorpe (p. 11). And though the text mentions that before the school was built, “we had lessons outside. We wrote with sticks, on the ground,” unlike *Four Feet, Two Sandals* the accompanying image is not of children writing with sticks. Depictions of poverty are excluded. On a much more positive note, a group of children is
shown holding pencil and paper (see Figure 34). In the curriculum guide, students are asked “why is school important?” (p. 9).

Figure 34: "We study in the school that we helped to build.”

Cultural differences are minimized in the text, but are embedded in the image. Though the text does not mention the separation of boys and girls, or traditional dress, Roth’s collages fill in this cultural aspect. The gender separation in the first double-page spread (see Figure 34) is reassuringly resolved on the last page, where boys and girls are seen together in a classroom (see Figure 35).

Figure 35: “We are the children of Korphe.”
Maps of the world and Pakistan are on the wall. Books line the shelves. 

Alongside, the text focuses on familiar elements of school life:

We write in Urdu and English. We add and subtract. We read our books and explore our maps. . . . We are the children of Korphe. Can you hear our voices? Listen to the wind. . . .

Socio-cultural and economic differences find common ground in the all too familiar setting of a classroom. Education, it would appear, is the global leveler. Just as the conclusion and metaphoric title speaks of global interconnectedness.

*Listen to the Wind* is the only book in this study’s selection that is designed for 6 to 8-year-olds. When compared to the young reader’s edition, it is clear that historical background, politics, poverty and even realistic depictions are excluded. Cultural differences, albeit visually represented, are minimized in the text and curriculum guide. Instead, texts-images and instruction about the world all perform the developmentally appropriate cultural work, in which ‘globalizing’ the very young reader begins at the level of human universalisms. The harder task of bridging differences is left for later. But irrespective of age, Mortenson attempts to bridge the chasm between the ethical and political through a discourse (textual and in practice) on education.

**Conclusion**

Narrating the current war in Afghanistan presents a dilemma for authors who unanimously condemn war, but are writing for a young American audience who needs to be reassured of the virtues of their country. How do the authors in this chapter’s selection, resolve this challenge? To begin with, authors make a distinct difference between the U.S. abroad and at home. The U.S.’s implication in wars is condemned,
cosmopolitan universalism is reaffirmed, and liberalism’s recognition of transnational and non-profit organizations is upheld. Instead, when novels and picture books conclude with immigration, the U.S. remains the iconic land where war victims are promised equality and prosperity. The analysis of the texts, images, and teaching guides identified a crucial gap in the bifurcated conceptualization of an America “abroad” and at “home.” This delinking of the world from the Self at home, fails to connect the dots between the reader’s context and global implications. Teaching guides would gain from applying global education’s principle of interconnections and interdependence.

More concerned with the human consequences of war on children, these books leave readers with a deep empathy for human suffering, but little knowledge of what might cause war in the first place. Significantly, this depoliticization is less evident in Canadian author Deborah Ellis, who interjects her narration with some historical background, while remaining politically neutral. Irrespective of the extent to which context is offered, all these authors adopt a critical international relations stance, which asks the question, *how does an individual’s empowerment come about?* The consensual response is access to education. Education as form of political resistance in Afghanistan, and even global peace, offers an ethical antidote to the violent aspects of politics.

Although the authors share a common discourse on education as a means to empowerment, there is a marked difference when it comes to narrating Muslim culture and Islam. Hollindale (1988) and Stephen (1992) observe that children’s literature is a key domain within which larger societal discourses are contested, debated and transformed. I propose that in an age of easy access to information, travel and
collaboration, the decision to include or exclude culture/religion cannot be judged in terms of an author’s cultural proximity or the lack of it. Instead, the way we give meaning to other cultures and religions is an ideological choice between a secular or faith-inclusive worldview. At the risk of hitching my argument to an over ambitious canvas, I would argue that this ideological tension between secular and religious worldviews reflect differences that play out both in the texts and the actual world.

It is disheartening that though this study began with the intention of taming the importance of cultural practices, culture continues to haunt the narration of South Asia. When narrating the development and modernization of these countries, cultural traditions are cited as reasons for the slow development of these countries. When human rights violations of child rights overlap with female disempowerment, cultural practices are blamed. But, when it comes to the narration of wars in the region, authors are careful not to advance the opinion that it is a clash of cultures. Such gaps point to the complexities that characterize global engagement. Reading transcultural literature through a critical global perspective is a valuable approach for educators who wish to bring to the classroom the kind of global awareness that can thoughtfully calibrate global engagement with critical consciousness.
CHAPTER 7: TOWARDS A CRITICAL GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

This study demonstrated that the use of transcultural literature, as a means to build bridges across the world, presents a complex task that engages text, images, local and global contexts. Thus far, the study has focused on the representation of South Asia in books published from 1989 to 2009. A web of connections was unraveled between the text-images and the narration of Third World development, human rights and models of International Relations. At this juncture, it is time to reflect on the wider implications of these narratives, the opportunities missed, and the possibilities offered. In the spirit of global education’s goal of cosmopolitanism and peace education, and the use of transcultural literature as a mobilizer for transformative global action, I now ask how these narratives and teaching guides are preparing Americans as future global citizens.

Looking back at the narration of challenges faced by developing countries, education and the role of the American educator abroad are clearly dominant discourses on societal and global change. Despite the importance of education in fostering self-empowerment and social development, these narratives miss valuable opportunities when it comes to cross-cultural awareness and peace education. In this concluding chapter, possible causes for these limitations are identified. Looking forward, the study concludes with a conceptual reorganization of the 20 questions that combined social and political theories with literary criticism and visual analysis. Six defining concepts of a critical global perspective are identified: change, perspectives, hierarchical binaries,
relationships, political undertones, and visual communication. Viewing these questions from the point of view of concepts, rather than issues, highlights the flexibility of this approach.

**Educating for Change**

All these books dealt with asymmetrical power relations, whether it was due to stifling gender roles, poverty, or political forces. Hence, the need for oppressed subjects to construct a consciousness of self-identity and resistance is germane to the discourse of the books. Viewed together, the authors offered different suggestions on how change should come about. Whether it was under the auspices of a benevolent philanthropist, the influence of American life and education, microfinance loans, political activism, or grassroots movements, all these paths enabled the protagonist to change the way power relations in their culture, socio-economic and political context affected their lives. Young women challenged culturally sanctioned gender roles. Socio-economic power relationships that led to the exploitation of children were overcome through the consciousness of an individual’s right to choice and participation in collective activism. When narrating war, the impact of political forces on civilians and children was resisted through grassroots movements, immigration, and the sheer grit to survive. But, without exception, these authors proposed education as the catalyst for self-awareness and change. Education mobilized development, emancipated individuals, brought hope, and had the potential to nurture international peace by reconciling politics with ethics. Poised between the individual and society, education was both a form of resistance and reconstitution.
But, what is the narrative of the American protagonist as a global citizen? In many of these books, local and global contexts are bridged by the American educator and American education. The American educator offers a countervailing secular and scientific worldview to irrational beliefs, produces sites of resistance to exploitative power relations, and through global activism can even defuse potential conflicts in international relations. American education imbues modes of governance with a sense of equality, justice, and modernity. Despite the value of this contribution, I suggest that readers should be wary that the discursive connection between America-education-empowerment does not minimize the active involvement of the recipient culture or nation. If there is any one point to be taken away from theories on culture, development, human rights, and International Relations, it would be the need to hone a conceptual understanding of social processes of change, and encourage the sensitivity that any agency of transformation should be collaborative, if not organic.

Ollsen, Codd and O’Neill (2004) remind us that discourse is “anchored in extra-discursive conditions of a given political and economic order” (p. 68). As books written by and for Americans, the narrative will always be questioned on the basis of the actual realities of U.S. influence in the region. Therein lies the paradox in multicultural and global education’s call to promote social activism (Bishop, 1997; Cai, 2002; Harris, 1997). When transcultural literature “exports” activism against violation of human rights, or promotes peace education, the honorable intentions of Americans will remain suspect of a national rather than global discourse. It is imperative that American educators, who
include transcultural literature on the Third World, are aware of the complexities brought forth by different global contexts and perspectives.

**Opportunities Missed: Managing Cultural and Political Multiplicities**

Literary merit aside, transcultural literature is valued for its contribution to a cosmopolitan worldview that opens a window to the world, while constructing bridges that are mindful of self-reflection. At this juncture, it is fitting to return to the framework of multicultural and global education and assess what opportunities have been missed by some of these books and why.

The notion of global citizenship, also referred to as cosmopolitanism, is the current meeting ground of multicultural and global education. A cosmopolitan would transcend the nation-state model, mediate the local and the global, and be culturally anti-essentialist. The very notion of transcultural literature satisfies these goals. What remains unclear is whether transcultural literature, as exemplified in this study’s selection, meets the other goals of cosmopolitanism, viz. to represent “variously complex repertoires of allegiance, identity and interest” in ways that “offer a mode of managing cultural and political multiplicities” (Vertovec and Cohen, 2002, p. 4).

**The problem with culture.**

How does transcultural literature manage cultural multiplicities? Paul Rabinow suggests that “conversation between individuals or cultures, is only possible within contexts shaped and constrained by historical, cultural, and political relations and the only partially discursive social practices that constitute them” (1986, p. 239). In this study, I have illuminated the global and national contexts of transcultural literature’s
“conversation between cultures.” In the global arena, it is scrutinized within the context of current political realities. Within the national discourse, transcultural literature’s “conversation between cultures” operates in the context of multiculturalism’s celebration of cultural diversity and global education’s call for cultural awareness.

Much, however, remains to be learned from the American experience of the nexus between cultural awareness, social activism and multicultural education. In 1982, Rudine Sims observed that in the late 1950s and 1960s, books on African-Americans aimed at developing the social consciousness of white children, “to encourage them to develop empathy, sympathy, and tolerance for Afro-American children and their problems” (p. 17). In contrast, “culturally conscious” books, written primarily by African Americans, reflected “both the uniqueness and universal humanness of the Afro-American experience from the perspective of an Afro-American child or family” (p. 15). Sims’ comment leaves me wondering if the narration of Third World cultures is also overtaken by the need to develop the global consciousness and empathy of the largely American reader, while not giving adequate voice to the perspectives of these cultural “others.”

Unfortunately, the writing and teaching of transcultural literature remains caught between the binaries of celebrating and condemning other cultures. On the one hand, the aesthetic sensibilities of a cultural tradition are celebrated as a path towards self-empowerment, but at the other end of the spectrum, the portrayal of disempowering cultural traditions echoes the “problem novel” genre of adolescent literature and critical multiculturalism’s concern with crippling power relationships in race, gender and class. It is the latter aspect that leads to the pedagogical goal of educating global citizens who are
ethically committed to combating injustices in the world. That in itself is not problematic.

Undoubtedly, any society that is culpable of female disempowerment, human rights violations, social inequities, and debilitating traditions, needs to change. And without exception, this body of transcultural literature on South Asia and their teaching guides all mobilize their readers towards this aim.

The problem lies in the over emphasized nexus between change and culture. Hence, narratives and discussion guides may end up being exclusively preoccupied with those cultural aspects that need intervention, to the exclusion of issues regarding basic needs and capabilities. The unintended consequence of this approach may well lead to obscuring the heterogeneity of these dynamic societies. It is indicative that in this selection of 18 books, only Mitali Perkins (of Bangladeshi origin) portrays a proactive professional woman. Even when authors like Suzanne Fisher Staples present a more complex picture of the nexus between poverty, rural development, and female empowerment, teaching guides remain captive to an essentialist discourse on Muslim or Hindu culture, minimizing textual and visual references to the lack of basic needs. The skill of “managing cultural multiplicities” would mean including a much more kinetic and heterogeneous representation of other socio-cultural contexts. Only then, can narration avoid emancipatory discourses in which the American abroad initiates change (Sold). Otherwise, cultural multiplicity will be reduced to binaries of tradition versus modernity, us/them, the ‘West and the Rest.’
Wrestling with cosmopolitanism’s goal of including and negotiating cultural and political multiplicities requires more expansive modes of writing. The correlation between limitations of form and content is clearest in the narration of war.

**Managing political multiplicities.**

Over the last twenty to thirty years, writers of children’s and adolescent’s literature have tended to write through a child’s first-person or focalized perspective (Nikolajeva, 2002, p. 173). It makes for a more engaging text-reader relationship, and inevitably focuses on what is relevant to the young audience. It is worthwhile, at the conclusion of this study, to ask what opportunities are missed at the cost of engagement and relevance. Throughout this study, I have noted the peripheral limits of a first person or focalized narration through the experience of a single protagonist (Stephens, 1992). As Stephens (1992) comments, first-person narration inscribes ideology by “situating readers in a subject position effectively identical with that of the narrator” (p. 57). Unfortunately, though this mode of narration undoubtedly beckons the identification and empathy of the reader, it also excludes perspectives that are “profoundly different from one's own” (Hanvey, 1976, p. 5). The disadvantage of this preferred narrative point of view was most salient in chapter books and novels that narrate war.

No longer does children’s literature shy away from narrating the human consequences of war on children and their families. Readers come away with an empathetic understanding of the emotional and social impact of war, but unfortunately the child’s first-person narration excludes historical and political details. This depoliticization prioritizes the instilling of ethical values but avoids the critical ability to
contextualize war in terms that go beyond the personal. It is significant that Ellis’ trilogy is written in the third person, thereby permitting commentary on “the bigger world” of globalization and political conflict. Problems also arise when young adult readers rarely, if ever, meet the other point of view. When written for a young audience, authors seem to avoid occasions which demonstrate an equitable dialogue that can reach common ground despite ideological differences. There is little, if any, exposure to perspectives that are radically different from those shared by the protagonist, the reader, and the voice of the narrator. If conflict resolution and peace education necessitates a conversation with other worldviews, the focalized or first person narrative point of view leaves me skeptical as to whether transcultural literature prepares adolescents to acquire this crucial skill. A truly cosmopolitan narrative would get to the heart of peace education by negotiating different cultural and political realities. Though authors like Staples, Ellis, and Mortenson are already moving towards this direction, there remains a lot of room for teaching guides designed to foster inquiring minds that can wrestle with global complexities.

Admittedly, the focus on individuation in first person narration, images and discussion guides, supports the ideological primacy of individual agency in democratic political systems. And admittedly, the third-person omniscient narrator can be accused of creating an illusion of authorial (and ideological) plurality. Yet the implication of narrating from a limited point of view remains: by foregoing a “polyphonic space” which allows for a set of differences to appear, the narrative is bereft of cosmopolitanism’s inclusion of cultural and political multiplicities and peace education’s emphasis on conflict resolution.
At the risk of overextending my argument to narrative forms, I suggest that global education’s call for interconnectedness and perspective-consciousness (Hanvey, 1976, p. 5) are important unexplored dimensions in the way transcultural literature narrates the world. The relationship between literary form and worldview is not new. It has been amply discussed by literary critics who point out that the novel embodied a new way of perceiving reality (Eagleton, 1983). Slaughter (2007) draws connections between the ascendancy of the *bildungsroman*, as a genre of consciousness, and the discourse on human rights. It is not improbable that in an age of heightened sensibilities to global interdependence and cosmopolitanism, new forms of writing will evolve. In the meantime, what perspectives do book covers and publisher’s teaching guides offer, and how do they extend the possibilities of transcultural literature?

**Book Covers and Teaching Guides: Going Beyond Empathy and Relevance**

Ultimately, the study of discourse is important because it is concerned with how the regulation of knowledge constructs the real. As Foucault puts it, discourse is characterized by a “delimitation of a field of objects, the definition of a legitimate perspective for the agent of knowledge, and the fixing of norms for the elaboration of concepts or theories” (as cited in Mills, p. 47). Publishers’ book jacket hooks and teaching guides, as “agents of knowledge” further a “legitimate perspective” in the way we know and understand the world. Marketing lures and learning practices advanced by publishers often harden us/them oppositions, encourage unexamined generalizations, or appeal to a de-contextualized empathy, even when the text or image offers scope for a more nuanced reading.
Comparisons and generalizations.

On book covers, publishers display catchy phrases on a girl’s “struggle to find her place” in her culture (Harper Collins on *Homeless Bird*), or that the dictates of tradition “will mean an end to her liberty” (Random House on *Shabanu*). Reading guides also delimit the complexity of the text by insisting on the “legitimate perspective” of pitting culture against modernity, rather than seeking bridges between these assumed polarities.

Teaching guides often solicit comparisons between the American way of life and the represented culture. Although comparisons are important heuristic devices, having enough contemporary information on the dynamic changes these societies are undergoing, would ensure a balanced worldview that does not inadvertently underscore cultural hierarchies. Stuart Hall (1996) cautions that the dichotomous notion of the ‘West and the Rest,’ reflects an ideologically based perspective in global power relations (pp. 186-187). At its most perilous, discussion guides encourage readers to pursue hasty generalizations based on one book, even when an author’s preface seem to be at odds with these extrapolations (*The House of Djinn*). There is a codependent relationship between comparisons and generalizations; comparisons are based on generalizations. If unexamined, it makes for a divisive, rather than interdependent worldview.

Learning through empathy and relevance.

One way of avoiding accusations of divisive comparisons is to bypass context and appeal to interpersonal connections between the reader and the protagonists. Book covers favor de-contextualized close-ups that seek the attention and engagement of a prospective reader/buyer. In teaching guides, readers are asked to imagine themselves in the
predicament of a character. As a pedagogical enterprise, it connects the reader to the text, and overrides differences by encouraging empathy with a common human condition.

Empathy is problematic for two reasons. First, this enthusiasm for individuals as the source of meaning, action, and change, is untenable if the supporting framework of assumptions (social, cultural, and economic) is not adequately accounted for. Critical literary theorists have long since pointed out the deeply rooted prioritization of individualism in American consciousness (Belsey, 1980; Sarland, 1999; Stephens, 1992).

Second, empathy is a limited perspective. Hanvey (1976) distinguishes between empathy and transspection. He explains that “Empathy, then, means the capacity to imagine oneself in another role within the context of one's own culture. Transspection means the capacity to imagine oneself in a role within the context of a foreign culture” (p. 18). He adds that empathy is a national perspective, whereas transspection is a global perspective, and educators should provide students with “maximum experience in transspection.” (p. 19).

Extending the criticism of literary theorists and the advice of global educators, I suggest that the privileging of empathy, rather than transspection, can be traced back to learning practices in literature and the current perception of what constitutes learning. In this respect, rather than a deliberate perpetuation of an Orientalist disposition of comparative binaries, generalizations, hierarchies, and empathetic connections (Said, 1979), these guides are motivated by the urge to engage the readers in ways that are relevant to their life.
For instance, reading transcultural literature through the common matrix of text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world connections, could be problematic (Ellin Oliver Keene and Susan Zimmerman, 1997). In the text-self connection, it is presumed that personal relevance makes for a more committed reading. Though this teaching strategy has much to commend it, unless educators substantiate the reading with adequate background on contemporary world dynamics, it is reasonable to assume that readers will make connections to the only world they know: their own. Not only does the complexity of context and other perspectives risk being minimized, but regrettably, this pursuit may end up excluding a reflection on the very assumptions that support the way readers connect the dots between text…self…world. In my view, in the case of transcultural literature on contemporary events, educators need to invert the chain to world-text, text-text, and text-to self (ves). It is a radically different way of locating the self in the world.

I am reminded of Allan Luke’s (2003) comment that in a post 9/11 world there is an urgent need for critical literacy which engages with the global, and a curriculum that is not limited to local relevance:

There is often limited articulation into broader conversations about how local contexts, experiences, and issues fit with the parallel and competing outside worlds, cultures and economies. The risk here is a kind of parochial literacy that, in search of relevance, simply fences kids into the local. (2003, p. 20)

The “search for relevance” is a key issue in learning. I too would not have undertaken the topic of South Asian transcultural literature had it not been, in some way, relevant to my preoccupations. Relevance sparked my interest and relevance to the
contemporary world sustained it. But, learning happened in between. What is learning? Is it situated in the Self, within the community, or in the process?

Learning has been described as a “community of practice” (Lave and Wenger, 2002) or a “way of talking about the shared historical and social resources, frameworks, and perspectives that can sustain mutual engagement in action” (Wenger, 1998, p.5). If learning activates communal identity, the problem for multiple global perspectives is evident. How does one veer away from the pitfalls of parochialism and manage global pluralities? Or, as Gee (2008) observes, “with the notion of a ‘community’ we can’t go any further until we have defined who is in and who is not, since otherwise we can’t identify the community” (p. 88). Transformative learning is possible when educators and readers are encouraged to question the “communities of practice” they are entrenched in, and identify how the texts, images, and guides define “who is in and who is not” part of that shared “engagement in action.” It is hoped that the critical global perspectives proposed in this study, will facilitate a more reflective and contextual reading of, and learning from, transcultural literature on developing countries.

**Reading with a Critical Global Perspective**

Educators and readers of fiction recognize Nel Noddings’ (2005) comment that the use of literature in teaching “cultural sensitivity, moral reflection, and global understanding” depends on how it is read, and to what extent self-reflection and critical thinking is encouraged (p. 123). To date, books on the teaching of literature about the world as a window to the world have included a history of the country and information on the challenges the novels address. The most recent example of this approach is *Exploring*
African Life and Literature: Novel Guides to Promote Socially Responsive Learning

(Glasgow and Rice, 2007), which aims at a “pedagogy for a global perspective” (p. 10). Heeding Noddings’ emphasis on reflection and critical thinking, this study identified and exemplified a critical global perspective in the reading of transcultural literature, which is guided by Hanvey’s (1976) description of a global perspective: (1) consciousness of unexamined assumptions and other perspectives, (2) awareness of prevailing world conditions, (3) cross-cultural awareness, (4) global dynamics, or knowledge on “theories and concepts that may increase intelligent consciousness of global change” (p. 19) and (5) awareness of human choices. Throughout this study, Hanvey’s 5 domains were systematically operationalized. Most importantly, this study is grounded in the belief that a global perspective cannot be critical without an awareness of the theoretical debates and controversies that emerge from and condition the way we look at the world. “Knowledge of theories and concepts” (Hanvey, 1976, p.19) expands the educator’s recognition of other perspectives. When appropriately harnessed, the juxtaposition of theories opens the text to alternative interpretations, which give the reader an empowering insight into the ideological struggles played out within the text and world. Hopefully, I have made a case that theories are not abstract constructs, but part of our life, social practices, and worldview.

Using the text as a springboard for analysis on social and global processes, rather than limited to empathetic connections or comparisons, strengthens the reader’s awareness of global dynamics and the underpinning concepts that connect the dots between world-text-self. This is best illustrated in Greg Mortenson’s Pennies for Peace
Curriculum. In “The Cultural Effect” (pp. 20-21), students are asked: “How does our own culture shape us and influence our behavior? “How do cultural differences cause problems in our global community? How might those problems be overcome?” Such questions encourage readers to go beyond comparisons and generalizations, by widening the scope of inquiry.

The concept of social and global change is vital to a global perspective (Hanvey, 1976). Of the 11 teaching guides examined in this study there was only one instance in which students were encouraged to consider change as a social process common to all societies. This was the guide on Rickshaw Girl, which was co-authored by Mitali Perkins. I cannot overstate the importance of questions like: “Societies change from generation to generation. How is Naima’s life different from her mother’s? What might be causing those changes? Ask students to list some differences between their lives and their parents’ lives. What is causing those changes?” Rather than looking only at the need for South Asian societies to change, students think about how all societies change. Most significantly, change is viewed as an inevitable social process common to all societies, regardless of whether it is ‘developed’ or not, Western or otherwise. In my view, less polemical bridges can be constructed by examining the universalism of concepts common to all societies, rather than collapsing into comparative cultural generalizations.

It can be argued that these recommendations - applying a global perspective, and identifying the narration of social processes and change - are more appropriate for older readers of chapter books and novels. What about younger readers who listen to, and look at picture books? Inexplicably, there is a glaring lack of attention to visuals in the
teaching guides. After all, every teacher uses cover images to predict the story or theme, and pictures enhance a more interactive reading of the text. In transcultural picture books, the details offered by illustrators enhance, complement, and extend the text. Applying visual semiotic analysis, this study has amply demonstrated how attention to images can empower students and teachers to decode inscribed messages. Going beyond the picture of the muezzin, or girls in head covers, images can tell another “story” about the heterogeneity of cultures, living conditions in refugee camps, international organizations, and even the dynamic mix of tradition and modernity. Regardless of whether one reads transcultural literature for its literary value or to support global education, images present unique opportunities for readers and non-readers to actively observe, analyze and evaluate the visuals presented to them. For younger non-readers, visuals are an invaluable resource for inquiry and discussion.

This study’s specific contribution to the application of a critical global perspective is the road map of 20 questions that were drawn from the multi-dimensional method that guided the analysis (see Figure 36). In order to make evident that the questions address both the key precepts of a global perspective, and critical discourse analysis of texts and images, they have been reorganized according to 6 main concepts: change, perspectives, hierarchical binaries, relationships, politics, and visual communication.
LOOK FOR CHANGE

1. How does an individual’s empowerment come about?
2. Through what processes is cultural change narrated in these books?
3. Is there evidence of a shift in a ‘selective tradition’ in cultural representations?
4. How can the book/s be read in a way that surfaces multiple discourses regarding social transformation?

SEEK OUT PERSPECTIVES

5. What discourses are included and excluded in the text (and, or image)?
6. How do language-use and narrative structure limit discourse?
7. How do authors regard the benefits or demerits of globalization?

IDENTIFY RELATIONSHIPS

8. How does the story depict the relationship between civil, political, social, economic, and cultural rights?
9. How do authors resolve the tension between individual self-actualization and familial/communal ties?
10. What role does culture play?
11. Are human rights violations ascribed to culture?

IDENTIFY BINARIES & HIERARCHIES

12. What or who is being contrasted textually and/or visually?
13. Does development entail an opposition between tradition and modernity?
14. If so, are Western models of modernization being privileged?

EVALUATE POLITICAL UNDERTONES

15. Does the book tackle the dilemma of modernizing the Third World, while not undermining its autonomy?
16. How does the author narrate the nation?
17. What is the role of supranational organizations?
18. Is there a political subtext in the narration of change?

INVESTIGATE VISUAL COMMUNICATION

19. How do images support, extend, or problematize the narrative’s discourses?
20. How do picture books and novels differ in the resolution of socio-cultural, economic and political problems, especially with respect to power relations?

Figure 36: Twenty guiding questions
These questions allow for a more nuanced reading of transcultural literature on the developing world, than what is currently offered by teaching guides. And most importantly, they recognize that reading transcultural literature is not only a matter of literary textual analysis based on cultural comparisons and generalizations. Visuals bear equal importance, as do the broader global discourses on vital issues such as development, human rights, and peace education.

A critical global perspective, such as the one demonstrated in this study, emphasizes that educators and readers of transcultural contemporary realism that is narrated in developing countries, should (1) address the five-point paradigm of a global perspective, (2) attend to the narration of social transformation and inquire whether the agency to change is inflected by top-down power relations, (3) resist first-person or focalized narration, by seeking out excluded or minimized perspectives, and (4) “read” visuals for the attributes given to other cultures and contexts. My formulation of 20 guiding questions (see Figure 36) is intended to enhance such a reading of transcultural literature by thoughtfully calibrating the inquiry through text-world connections. When relevant social and political theories are combined with the critical lens of discourse analysis of texts and images, common assumptions can be demystified, excluded perspectives identified, contradictions revealed, and latent power relationships between the implied reader and the represented “other” exposed. In doing so, a critical global perspective brings transcultural literature closer to achieving its goals of cross-cultural understanding, global awareness and thoughtful global activism. Lastly, it bears underscoring that though there may be limitations to some works of transcultural
literature, the uniqueness of literature lies precisely in its potential to provoke discussions that are willing to confront ambiguities, fathom complexities, and challenge comfortable assumptions.

The Way Forward

Although this study focused on transcultural literature on South Asia, the 20 questions that were distilled from social and political theories and discourse analysis of texts and images can be applied to any literary work that deals with the narration of cultural traditions, development, human rights, war and refugees, in other developing regions of the world. Gloria Whelan’s picture book *Yatandou* (2009) about the mechanization of millet grinding in a village in Mali, and *Broken Memory: a Novel of Rwanda*, by Élisabeth Combres (2009) come to mind.

This study’s approach of integrating literary and visual analysis with a critical global perspective may well prove fruitful in addressing the role of media in informing global education. From 1988 to 2008, a number of movies and documentaries on South Asia have dealt with human rights and socio-cultural issues. Many of these films are easily accessible in North America. Mira Nair’s feature film *Salaam Bombay!* (1988), which was shot in Mumbai’s red light district, won the Golden Camera at the Cannes Film Festival. On a similar topic, Ross Kauffman and Zana Briski’s documentary *Born into Brothels* (2004) won the Best Documentary Feature Award at the 77th Annual Academy Awards. More recently, Danny Boyle’s *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008), a rag to riches story shot in Mumbai’s slums, won 8 Oscars. Whether in literature, journalism or films, the relationship between tradition and modernity, culture and human rights, and the
narration of nation-building, remain important entry points for discussing how power relations are challenged, and change is enabled in the representation of developing countries. A critical global perspective, as proposed in this study, prepares educators to wrestle with the broader discourses that shape the world we live in.
REFERENCES


APPENDICES

Appendix A: List of books


Jane Addams Special Commendation Award for *The Breadwinner Trilogy* (2004)


Jane Addams Children’s Book Award (2003)

Jane Addams Special Commendation Award for *The Breadwinner Trilogy* (2004)


Jane Addams Special Commendation Award for *The Breadwinner Trilogy* (2004)


- National Book Award Finalist (2006)


Jane Addams Children’s Book Award (2008)


Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People, NCSS/CBC, (2009)


ALA Best Books for Young Adults (1990)

International Reading Association (IRA) Teacher’s Choice

IRA Young Adults’ Choice

Newbery Honor Book (1990)


ALA Notable Book


ALA Best Book for Young Adults


National Book Award (2000)

Notable Books for a Global Society (2001)

Appendix B: *Homeless Bird*, HarperCollins guide

**About This Guide:**

*Homeless Bird* by Gloria Whelan's novel looks at Indian culture and one girl's struggle to find her place in it. This reading group guide is designed to examine these differences and encourage discussion about this unique and graceful book.

**About This Book:**

Like many girls her age in India, thirteen-year-old Koly is getting married. But her excitement and hope turn to dread when she meets her husband; a sickly boy who is much younger than Koly and her family were led to believe. When her new husband dies, Koly must take on the only identity allowed her by society—that of a widow. Faced with a lifetime of subservience, poverty, and isolation, Koly realizes how alone she is. Yet this rare young woman, bewitched and brave, sets out to forge her own exceptional future. And a new life, like a beautiful tapestry, comes together for Koly—one stitch at a time.

**For Discussion:**

1. Koly ends up in a series of unfortunate situations. Who can be blamed for her misfortune? Her parents? The Mehtas? Society? Koly herself? Or, do all these factors work together to influence her life? Is it possible to root out one cause for Koly’s misfortune? Conversely, who can be credited for the good turn Koly’s life eventually takes?

2. In Koly’s society in India, life is highly defined from beginning to end. How does this compare to life in the United States? Can you say the same for all the different groups in the United States (i.e. religious, ethnic, regional)?

3. In India, young girls are expected to marry. How does this affect their families’ treatment of them? What do the families gain from a good marriage? How is Koly affected by this expectation to marry? How would your life be different if you were expected to marry in a few years?

4. When Koly becomes a widow, she takes on a specific, rigidly defined role in society. What does being a widow mean for Koly? In what ways does this role restrict her? In what ways does it set her free?

5. The ability to read takes on great importance for Koly. Why is she originally kept from learning to read? Why does Samsi agree to teach her? What effect does it have on the rest of her life?

6. Discuss the different bird images that are used throughout the book. What traits do birds have that make them particularly appropriate for Koly’s story? Why does she relate to the homeless bird?

7. Like all the women in her family, Koly learns to embroide quilts and sari. As she explains, “All [the women’s] thoughts and dreams went into their work … because it took so long, each sari became a part of our lives.” Discuss the ways in which Koly’s life and her embroidery become interwoven. Isn’t a way you express your thought and dreams about life, for example, through singing, participating in sports or writing?

8. Does Koly believe that Samsi will find happiness? Why or why not? Why do you think that Koly was able to find happiness at the end of the book? What makes Koly different from Samsi in this respect? What does it mean to be truly wealthy?
Appendix C: *Shabanu*, Random House teacher’s guide

**NOTE TO TEACHERS**

Reading Suzanne Fisher Staples’s books is like taking a journey to a faraway place. *Shabanu* and *Haveli*, suspenseful novels about a girl growing up in Pakistan, can be read and enjoyed on their own by students, but the books also lend themselves to cross-cultural studies and provide many opportunities for activities across the disciplines. In addition, “wannabe” writers will not only be enchanted by Staples’s sumptuous, exotic language but also can learn techniques to use in their own work. Each novel stands on its own, but after reading *Shabanu*, few students will be able to resist *Haveli*, its sequel. Even if your students are reading just one of the books, we recommend that you read through this entire guide because you will find that there are questions and activities under each title that may be used with both books.

**TEACHING IDEAS**

**Before Reading the Novel**

- Pretend it is your wedding day. Now imagine that your family has arranged the marriage and that you do not love your intended partner. In addition, if you are a girl, your husband might already have other wives. How do you feel?
- Predict. Staples calls Shabanu “daughter of the wind.” Think of the qualities of the wind and describe a person who could have those attributes. Choose an aspect of nature that defines you. “I am the son or daughter of _______ because…”
- Pack a bag. We’re going on a trip to a country where families do decide whom their children will marry. Travel light, because we’ll be riding a camel. Shabanu, a Pakistani tomboy, will be our guide. Look at the map in the front of your book. Now locate Shabanu’s homeland on a world map. To visit her, how many countries will we have to cross? How many continents? What countries border her homeland?

Language could be a problem unless you check the glossary in the back of the book. How many could you make your camel hurry along if you didn’t know ‘giddyap’ was the way to say “giddyap”?

To create the romantic atmosphere and convey the setting, Staples uses exotic and sensuous language. Notice how she paints the images, invents the smells and the sounds. She uses strong verbs - Mama “slaps” the bread into shape; Dadi “scoops” Shabanu into his arms; blowing sand “skins” people alive. Borrow some of her powerful words to recycle in your writing. Staples won’t mind.

We’ll be on the move. Shabanu is a nomad. Finding our roots, determining who we are, is hard enough when our environment stays the same. What do you think would be the disadvantages if your home kept shifting, like Shabanu’s? What are the advantages?

- Keep a journal. To experience Pakistan’s culture, what should we look for on our journey? In addition to our food, clothing, homes, manners, beliefs, customs, language,
music, art, and literature, what reveals American culture to visitors? Take notes comparing Shabanu’s world to yours.

**After Reading the Novel**

**Questions for Discussion**

1. How is the life of Shabanu’s family affected because they have no male children? How is their financial well-being affected? Explain how having no brothers has shaped Shabanu. Do you feel that having a son is a high priority for a family in your culture?

2. Many people love animals, but Shabanu’s affinity with the camels, especially with Guluband and Mithoo, is extreme. What freedoms does Shabanu obtain from her job of caring for the camels? List things she learns from the camels that help her to understand human life.

3. When Shabanu begins to realize that Guluband might be sold, Dadi says, “What Allah wills cannot be changed” (p.49). How does she feel when it really happens? Why does she reject her impulse to take the animal and run away (p.56)? Later (p.63), Shabanu has intellectually accepted her father’s decision, but emotionally it is a different story. Explain why she feels she has lost her joy, her freedom, and her identity. How do you interpret her statement, on p. 85, that the experience has taught her “the strength of my will and its limits.” How does this foreshadow later events?

4. In this story, Shabanu experiences two great losses — Guluband Murad. Stables uses language of the heart to describe the girl’s feelings about the camel, but not the boy. Explain why you think she got it right or wrong.

5. One of the minor themes in the novel is the relationship between father and daughter, a tricky relationship in Pakistan? Trace the times Dadi acts from his heart toward Shabanu and those when he follows tradition and custom. For example, examine the scene when the camels fight on pp.23-26. When he does things “for her own good,” is he being a responsible father, or is he trying to break her spirit? How do you think American culture affects father-daughter relationships?

6. “Shabanu” is the name of a princess. Considering our Shabanu’s character and station in life, what is appropriate and inappropriate about the name? At the bazaar in Rahimyar Khan (pp. 70-74), do you think it is her name or her nature that causes the shopkeeper to give Shabanu the expensive and valuable gifts? Defend your answer with examples from the story. His kindness touches her heart. Explain how this gift of feeling grateful might have been more important than the items themselves, even though she is poor and has few clothes.

7. In the United States, how long are the young considered children? How long does childhood last for Muslims? At thirteen, Phulan is supposed to be a woman and act mature. Point to her conflicting feelings about her role and her forthcoming marriage to Hamir. Why does she wear a black chadr?

8. A dilemma is any situation requiring a choice between equally unpleasant alternatives. Explain Shabanu’s dilemma when she and Phulan meet Nazir Mohammad and his hunters. Her choosing to save her sister from rape leads to the story’s climax (see
Thinking Like a Writer on p. 5 of this guide). On p. 154, why is Shabanu angry at her sister? “She was asking for it” is still used as a defense by rapists. Does Shabanu’s anger show an anti-feminist response or is she, too, a victim, but a victim of her culture?

9. Irony is an event or an expression in which the intended meaning of the words is the opposite of what is expected. The chapter explaining that Phulan will marry Murad and that Shabanu is promised to Rahim is entitled “Justice.” First discuss the irony of the title as you see the situation, then look at the decisions made in this chapter in terms of the customs of Shabanu’s society.

10. Shabanu has always displayed her independence, and her mother has been understanding. Why do you think her mother slaps her when she says she will go to live with Sharma? Sharma accuses the family of having bought Phulan’s happiness and their security by selling Shabanu. Do you agree or disagree? How is this arrangement different from their having arranged her marriage to Murad? Defend or attack Dadi’s argument.

11. Sharma tells Shabanu she has two choices; Keep Rahim’s interest by learning the tricks of women or come to live with her. Considering the culture and Shabanu’s character. Predict what you think she will do. What would you have done?

12. What is Sharma meant to represent in the story? Is she wise or simply a rebel? Shabanu faces her future armed only with Sharma’s advice: keep your innermost locked in you heart. What does this mean? Do you think it will protect her?

Activities Across the Curriculum

Language Arts

1. Write from another point of view:
   ● Murad has always expected to marry feisty Shabanu, but when his older brother Hamir dies, the families arrange for him to marry the beautiful sister, Phulan. Staples doesn’t tell us how he feels. Create a scene from Murad’s point of view, showing his sadness, happiness, resentment, anger, or indifference.
   ● Describe Shabanu, her family, or an incident from their lives from the perspective of one of her aunts. Auntie is bitter and envious. Sharma is strong and independent. Be sure to create a voice that reveals character.
   ● Rewrite the conclusion from Dadi’s viewpoint.

2. Write a personal essay
   ● Pretend it’s the custom in your culture for parents to pick mates for their children. Write an account of whom or at least the type of person, your parents would choose for you. It’s okay to make it funny.
   ● Shabanu says men and camels aren’t so different. Men, too, practice shutr keena (camel vengeance). Write about when you might have seen shutr keena in action.

Art

3. Visit a museum: If a museum in your community has a collection of Islamic art, jewelry, or clothing, plan a class trip. Notice the importance of gold in most of the works. Islamic calligraphers and painters, noted for creating beautiful books, even put gold on paper. Fabrics are decorated with gold thread and jewels, like the wedding clothes
Shabanu describes in the story.

4. If a trip isn’t possible, ask a librarian and/or an art teacher to help you find photographs and drawings in books. Try to find someone in your community who has a Chadr, shatoosh, sari, or turban and who could demonstrate to the class how the fabrics are wrapped to cover the head and body.

**Social Studies**

5. Pretend you are a sociologist investigating the use and history of dowries. In the library, look for the origin of and the reason for the custom, cultures that have practiced it, and those that still do. Ask the librarian for titles of plays, poems, and novels that deal with the subject. Interview people from other countries and older people for anecdotes about the practice. Ask members of your family if dowries were ever paid in your family. After you have written your reports, hold a panel discussion on the topic of dowries.

6. Pakistan’s boundaries and rulers have changed many times. To put together a picture of the country’s past and present, divide research on the topics on what you have found.
   - Early history (Indus Valley civilization).
   - British rule
   - Independence (1947 and after).
   - Leaders such as Ali Bhutto and his daughter, Benazir.
   - Compare and contrast the Hindu and Muslim religions.
   - Explain the terrain. How much of the country is desert, mountains, fertile land? What are the major rivers, cities, the capital? Give the population, the major industries and products.
   - Report on the relations Pakistan has with India, Afghanistan, and the U.S.

**Music**

7. The sitar, a lute-like instrument, is popular in Pakistan. Play records like those of Ravi Shanker.

**Math**

8. At the bank, find out how many rupees equal a dollar. How many rupees would you need to buy a soda, a loaf of bread, jeans? Approximately how many dollars was Dadi paid for Guluband? What was the dollar cost of the shawls Shabanu bought for her sister’s dowry?

**DISCUSSION AND WRITING**

**Thinking Like a Writer**

1. Does your name affect the way you behave or think about yourself? Were you named for someone, or does your name have another meaning? How do names of characters in books affect the way you perceive them? Think of different names for Billy Budd, Huckleberry Finn, and Winnie-the-Pooh. As a writer, you have the fun and the power of naming your characters. Reserve a page in your notebook for interesting names to use in your stories. Staples often chooses names for her characters that mean something else: Phulan — “flower”; Mithoo — “Sweet”; Kalu — “black”; Sher Dil — “lion heart”; Xhush Dil — “happy heart.” Discuss the effectiveness of her choices.
2. A symbol is a writer’s tool that can increase the implication or beauty of the work. It is applied to a word or phrase that has significance but that also has a range of meaning beyond itself. On a literal level the chapter “Birth” (pp. 13-19) describes a dying camel giving birth. Can you see additional relevance and meaning in the scene in terms of the natural order, the ties between man and nature, and Shabanu’s culture? Explain the symbolic significance of the vulture and the snake, birth and death, and the other mothers’ rejection of Mithoo. How does Staples also use the scene to reveal and contrast Shabanu’s and Phulan’s characters?
Characters as symbols: Shabanu, Phulan, their mother, Auntie, and Sharma are all significant characters. But try to determine how their different natures also have a symbolic component, just as Grandfather represents history and Dadi represents social tradition.
Gender symbols: In the Muslim culture, male and female roles are rigidly defined. Explain how objects like the hookah and the chadr symbolize the gender roles. Describe the symbolic significance of the men’s and the women’s activities at Channan Pir. Point to the other examples in the story.
3. To create an interesting story, a writer has to create suspense by concocting conflicts and make the reader curious to know how they will turn out. Explain how the author uses the death of Mithoo’s mother as another problem that helps to move the plot along. What other incidents add to the suspense of how the family will raise Phulan’s dowry?
4. A story within a story: When a novelist has picked a cast of characters and developed a plot and a theme, he or she must write within that framework. Everything must reinforce the original plan. Even though Staples is telling Shabanu’s story, she included two other stories. In one, a girl has eloped with a Marri tribesman. Her kinsmen are looking for her and will kill her (p. 44). At Channan Pir, Sharma tells another story about a Rajput prince who tries to kill his child who is destined to be a saint (p. 105). If you had been Staples’s editor, would you have suggested she eliminate these stories because they do not pertain to Shabanu’s story, or can you see how they reinforce or relate to the main plot line?
5. A novel is structured so that all action builds toward a climax — the high point and the turning point in a story. Which event in the novel is the climax of the story? Explain how the climax affects the major characters.
Appendix D: Haveli, Random House guide

Reading Suzanne Fisher Staples’s books is like taking a journey to a faraway place. *Shabanu* and *Haveli*, suspenseful novels about a girl growing up in Pakistan, can be read and enjoyed on their own by students, but the books also lend themselves to cross-cultural studies and provide many opportunities for activities across the disciplines. In addition, “wannabe” writers will not only be enchanted by Staples’s sumptuous, exotic language but also can learn techniques to use in their own work. Each novel stands on its own, but after reading *Shabanu*, few students will be able to resist *Haveli*, its sequel. Even if your students are reading just one of the books, we recommend that you read through this entire guide because you will find that there are questions and activities under each title that may be used with both books.

TEACHING IDEAS

Before Reading the Novel

Jealousy is a grand literary passion. Actor Orson Welles called it “the seasickness of emotion.” You think you’re going to die, but everyone else thinks it’s funny. What makes you jealous? Severe cases of jealousy, like Iago’s in Othello, can have disastrous results. Imagine that you are an eighteen-year-old girl, married, with a child, like Shabanu — the main character in this novel. Then think what it would be like if your husband (forty-two years older than you) had three other wives and many other children — each with their own private grudge against you and your child.

Now imagine that you are a man in Shabanu’s world. What would be the advantages and disadvantages of living in a society where men could take as many wives as they wish? As good as it might be for the ego to have four women who love you, imagine handling the problems jealousy motivates.

A sense of being betrayed is another powerful and devastating emotion. What is the worst case of betrayal you have experienced or heard about?

Be prepared. We are about to dive into a world dominated by intrigue, Machiavellian plots, devious schemes, and insidious conspiracies, where not only status, happiness, land, and money are at stake, but also people’s lives. If you have read *Shabanu* — the story of Shabanu’s life until the age of twelve — you will already be aware of Nazir Muhammad, the evil man who will play a villainous role in this book. However, it is not necessary to know the other story, because Staples summarizes what has gone before in a series of flashbacks.

In addition to jealousy and betrayal, this story is also about contrasts among individuals,
groups, lifestyles, and values. In your journal, keep a running list of as many contrasts as you find, such as young and old or rich and poor.

Check the glossary. What does haveli mean? Predict why you think Staples might have given her novel this title.

After Reading the Novel
Questions for Discussion

1. This is obviously Shabanu’s story. What is her major goal? A story must have conflicts — troubles and problems that hinder the main Character from getting what she wants. What problems complicate Shabanu’s desire to find a safe and secure place for her and Mumtaz? What trouble arises from jealousy? Which problems are a result of the wrong combinations — Children with the wrong fathers, marriages to the wrong people, etc.? Does Shabanu create any of her own problems? How do her age and family background contribute?

2. We see many facets of Rahim’s character. Considering his actions and decisions, especially those involving Shabanu, Mumtaz, Zabo, Ahmed, Amina, Ibne, Nazir, and the parents of the child killed by the car, defend or attack his behavior.

3. At the end of the story, Shabanu says Omar is like Rahim; he will sacrifice everything to his duty and commitment to the family. How are the two men different? Considering everything that happens to the family in this story, defend or attack the men’s custom of doing their duty rather than following their hearts.

4. The exposition is also known as the rising action. Staples is building toward the climax, or turning point, in her story. How does Omar’s return from America change the situation? Tell how you think the story might have ended differently if he had not come back. Rahim’s murder is a dramatic moment, and it too has effects. Which event would you describe as the climax or turning point of the novel? Support your answer.

5. When Zabo asks Shabanu not to tell Rahim that her wedding to Ahmed has not been consummated, Shabanu betrays her oath of loyalty to her husband for the first time. What would you have done? How might the events that followed been different if she had told him?

Activities Across the Curriculum

Language Arts
1. We always wish for happy endings in stories, but a good writer, writing character-driven stories, tries for credibility — the way things really happen, not the way we wish they would. In groups of four, try to develop a more satisfying ending for Shabanu,
without changing her personality and character, in which she is at least with one of the people she loves — Mumtaz, Omar, Rahim, Dadi, Mama, or Zabo.

2. Even though she is only beginning to learn to read, it is as if Shabanu has read Virginia Woolf’s famous essay “A Room of One’s Own,” in her book of the same name. Read the essay and explain how Shabanu’s summer pavilion follows Woolf’s suggestions.

Art
3. Staples’s language is so descriptive that a picture forms in your mind as you read, as if the author were giving instructions to an artist. Sketch on of the following:

- A room, the courtyard, or the summer pavilion inside the haveli (pp. 82, 25-26, 91-92, 136)
- The jewelry in the bazaar (pp. 118-19)

Social Studies
4. Check your notes on contrasts. In this story, Staples shows the sharp differences between the lives of rich and poor, servants and employers, men and women, young and old. Carry the contrasts a step further. Pick two of these groups, and write an essay that compares the different attitudes, expectations, values, and treatment of these groups in the Pakistani culture with the attitudes, expectations, values, and treatment of them in your own culture.

5. Compare and contrast a Pakistani wedding to one in your culture. Compare the engagement, the clothes, the pre-wedding activities, as well as the ceremony itself, in each culture.

6. Polo is called a rich man’s sport or a gentleman’s game. The British learned it in India when they ruled the country. Research the history of the sport, the rules, the clothes players wear, and the field where it is played. Conclude your report by explaining why you think the scene where Shabanu watches Omar playing is so painful for her.

7. Set up a bazaar. Ask a home economics teacher or members of your family to help prepare food like chapati, kharin, curried lentils, and other edibles from Shabanu’s region. Make jewelry, clay pots, or shawls to sell in the stalls. Invite your families and other classes.

Questions for Discussion if You Have Read Both SHABANU and HAVELI

1. Mumtaz’s Choti and Shabanu’s Mithoo died unpleasant deaths before their time. Explain how the customs of the country contribute to or cause the death of both pets.

2. In the last line of Shabanu, Shabanu says, “Rahim-sahib will reach out to me for the
rest of his life and never unlock the secrets of my heart.” Considering what happens in Haveli, do you think her prediction comes true?

3. Shabanu’s last thought in Haveli is “Omar is my heart; and Mumtaz, Mumtaz is my freedom.” How do you interpret what she means? Does this conclusion leave you with hope or despair?

4. Recalling the life Shabanu had as a child and what Mumtaz experiences in her first five years, so you feel Mumtaz lost or gained by being sent back to live in the desert with the nomads? Which life would you prefer?

5. Omar was educated in America, where he began to think differently about women. We see him express his love for Shabanu at Zabo’s grave, but we also watch him being trained by Rahim, and we remember Dadi’s role in his daughters’ lives. Try to imagine what will happen to Omar after this story ends. Describe the man you think he will be, the kind of life he will have ten years later.

6. Although Sharma is not actually present in the majority of the scenes, she plays an important role in both stories, representing a new type of woman in the Islamic culture — she gives Shabanu a means of birth control, and she offers Zabo and Shabanu an escape from tradition. How do these things benefit or hurt these young women? Do you feel the author means for you to think of her as a sympathetic character? If so, do you think she represents the future of women in Pakistan?

7. In Shabanu (p. 219), just before Phulan’s wedding to Shabanu’s intended, her mother tells Shabanu “...you have much to learn before your strength works for you instead of against you.” If you think her prophecy comes true, trace the times when Shabanu’s strength was her weakness, what she learned, and how, in the tragic ending, her strength finally worked for her. If you disagree, disprove the foreshadowing statement.

**DISCUSSION AND WRITING**

**Thinking Like A Writer**

1. A subplot is a minor story within a novel that has a direct relationship to the main plot, making the story more interesting and adding complications to the struggle. In Shabanu, Shabanu’s complex relationship with her father was a subplot. In Haveli, the role she must play with her husband adds complications. On p. 9, while watching her mother adorn herself to go to her husband, Mumtaz says she looks like “Papa’s birds.” Explain how this metaphor describes Shabanu’s relationship with Rahim.

   Analyze the subplot of Selma’s story — her independence, her lack of funds, her love story, to determine how it sharpens your feelings about Zabo’s and Shabanu’s love
2. Suspense is the major device for securing and maintaining the reader’s interest in a story. It may be one of two major types: the outcome is uncertain and the suspense resides in the question of who, what, or how; or the outcome is inevitable from the events that have gone before and the suspense resides in the frightened anticipation of the outcome.

The characters in Haveli are constantly involved in schemes, plots, and intrigues that create suspense. Explain the suspense in the following: Shabanu’s and Zabo’s scheme to keep money for Zabo’s escape, Shabanu’s plan to take Mumtaz to the desert, Shabanu’s assuming Zabo’s identity. Point to other incidents.

3. To describe the exotic elements of her story, Staples has used rich, colorful, symbolic, and figurative language. But, not everything in the story is foreign. For example, the kinds of love between parents and children, men and women, and children and their animals are universal emotions and, therefore, perhaps more difficult to express in a fresh an interesting way. Analyze the way Staples allows the reader to experience Shabanu’s growing awareness of her love for Omar without his ever doing more than touching her hand.

(http://www.randomhouse.com/teachers/catalog/display.pperl?isbn=9780679865698&view=tg)
Appendix E: *The House of Djinn*, Farrar Strauss Giroux guide

**FARRAR STRAUS GIROUX**  
**DISCUSSION GUIDE**

**THE HOUSE OF DJINN**  
by Suzanne Fisher Staples

**Reading Level**  
Grades 7 up

“...Atmospheric and suspenseful...Like most of Staples’s fiction, this work significantly enriches the reader’s understanding of a complex society.”—Starred, Publishers Weekly

“Readers will ponder the questions about responsibility and freedom Staples raises in the intriguing marriage drama.”—Booklist

**About the Novel**

A commanding sequel to the Newbery Honor Book *Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind* and *Newel*.

It has been ten years since Shabanu staged her death to secure the safety of her daughter, Mumtaz, from her husband’s murderous brother. Mumtaz has been raised by her father’s family with the education and security her mother desired for her, but with little understanding and love. Only her American cousin Jameel, her closest confidant and friend, and the beloved family patriarch, Baba, understand the pain of her loneliness. When Baba unexpectedly dies, Jameel’s succession as the Amirzai tribal leader and the arrangement of his marriage to Mumtaz are revealed, causing both to question whether fulfilling their duty to the family is worth giving up their dreams for the future.

**Discussion Questions**

1. Where does the title of the book come from?
2. How would you describe a djinn?
3. Djinn and spirits (David’s and Baba’s ghosts) are never far from humans. What purpose do they serve?
4. Throughout the book, the author juxtaposes the male and female points of view. Western mores and tribal traditions, and romantic ideals of love and familial obligations. Find examples and compare and contrast.
5. Create a family tree for Mumtaz. Discuss why Loyce is upset when Jameel is named tribal leader and his arranged marriage to Mumtaz is announced.

**About the Author**

Suzanne Fisher Staples, a formerUPI correspondent, is the author of many acclaimed books for young readers, including the Newbery Honor Book *Shabanu*, *Shiva’s Fire*, a Publishers Weekly Best Book of the Year; and *Under the Parachute Tree*, an ALA Best Book for Young Adults and an ALA Notable Book. She lives in Nicholson, Pennsylvania.

**Web sites:**  
www.fgsbooks.com

Includes a biography of the author and additional information about her books as well as excerpts and other teachers’ guides.

**THE HOUSE OF DJINN**  
By Suzanne Fisher Staples  
ISBN-10: 0-374-39936-0

**FARRAR, STRAUS AND GIROUX**  
18 West 18th Street, New York, NY 10011

Visit www.fsgbooks.com for more information about titles, authors, and illustrators and to access Teachers’ Guides, Bibliographies, and more.
Appendix F: Rickshaw Girl, Charlesbridge and author’s guide

Activities to use with Rickshaw Girl

Social Studies
- Assign student to interview an older generation of their family—a mother or father, aunty or uncle, or grandparent. What restrictions or social norms of their background did they grow up with?
- Split students up into pairs or small groups. Have them interview each other about their own strengths and how they help their family, friends, and community.
- Naomi points above. These are decorative patterns that Bangladeshi women and girls paint in their homes for special celebrations. Naomi is very skilled and was praised for her alphabet designs. Study the designs in the illustrations of Rickshaw Girl. Have the class create their own alphabet and decorate the classroom. Put this with other alphabet projects you have Bangladesh Day at school and have the class prepare traditional books, wear saris, kurta, salwar kameez, and sarves. Directions on how to wear these are in the back of the book.

Art
- Chalk Alphabet: Use white chalk on the pavement or on black paper to outline patterns, then draw dots to form a word. Then use colored chalk to fill or outline the design. Visit Putalik’s Journey Through India (http://www.journeytoindia.com/workshop/1晟) for design templates, or Kentucky Educational Television’s Art Toddler Plan or Rangoli (http://www.ket.org/animated/coventoration/index.cfm).
- Sand or Salt Alphabet: Its traditional alphabet patterns, the outline is drawn on the floor and then filled in carefully with sprinkled colored powders. After drawing an outline of your pattern with chalk on the ground, fill in the different sections with colored sand (searched at art stores) and/or add colored water. Children may also draw their own patterns on a piece of paper with colored powders, fill in each section with white glue, and then sprinkle sprinkles off onto a large piece of newspaper. (See “Making Rangoli, Step by Step” on Karuna’s website (http://www.karanadancehall.orq/tut/gifting.htm))

Reading
- Real People: In Village Bangladesh, alpanas are made with rice paste. To color rice, add a healthy amount of floor coloring to two portions of rubbing alcohol in a Ziploc bag. Pour in about 3/4 cup of UNCOOKED rice. Close the bag tightly, shake well, and then pour onto a piece of wax paper or aluminum foil to dry for a day or two. Children can draw patterns on the floor or ground and use the rice carefully to fill in the patterns.

Vimala Alpana: Visit Nishat.com and check out the alpana (holos) in the gallery section. Have children drawing some of their own, either on the site via their flash animation or on paper. (Note: Alpana are seen throughout India, but they are called by different names when different languages are spoken. For example, they are known as Chhau in East India and Bangladesh and Rangoli in North India. They are also called alagda in the state of Andhra Pradesh, Bangladesh in Karnataka, Kumkumpan in Uttar Pradesh, Halwa in Rajasthan, and Arupsw in Bihar.)

Vimala Alpana: Visit Nishat.com and check out the alpana (holos) in the gallery section. Have children drawing some of their own, either on the site via their flash animation or on paper. (Note: Alpana are seen throughout India, but they are called by different names when different languages are spoken. For example, they are known as Chhau in East India and Bangladesh and Rangoli in North India. They are also called alagda in the state of Andhra Pradesh, Bangladesh in Karnataka, Kumkumpan in Uttar Pradesh, Halwa in Rajasthan, and Arupsw in Bihar.)

Naomi’s father tells her to tie her hair up and Naomi says, “Don’t do it for the photos. Make them right for their sake.” Discuss what he means by this.

- Naomi thinks to herself, “If only I had been born a boy.” Ask students if they ever wished they were born of the opposite sex. Discuss why they think life might be harder. Conversely, do they appreciate what they combine individually?

- Societies change from generation to generation. How is Naomi’s life different from her parents’? How do you think this society is changing from the time of the story to the present day? Ask students if they think the future will be more or less traditional?

- Painting designs is a tradition handed down from mother to daughter in the Bangladesh culture. Ask students about their own heritage and how their families celebrate them. Discuss how students’ own cultural traditions.

- While most of us are aware of our ancestral heritage, we don’t discuss what makes our families unique. Ask students to brainstorm American traditions and social mores such as Thanksgiving, apple pie, etc. As a follow-up discussion, ask students to think of their families and how those traditions relate to boys and girls in American culture.

- Naomi goes to work for a woman who requires her to be in a beautiful blouse every day. She is struggling because traditionally women don’t own blouses or hold positions considered men’s work. Mindi Petkus discussed in her book how women’s role is to accept whatever is assigned. Discuss the socialization of the class and ways a poor person in a village like Naomi’s might overcome poverty. Look at www.ket.org/animated/coventoration/culture.html about the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize winners, Muhammad Yunus and the Grameen Bank. Together they created a bank system that greatly assists the poor to help themselves by making small loans. 99% of these borrowers are women.

- A Discussion and Activity Guide for use with Rickshaw Girl

[Developed by Charlesbridge with Mindi Petkus content writer (2007) for HarperCollins]}

Naomi is a talented painter of traditional alphabet patterns, which Bangladeshi women and girls paint on their floors for special celebrations. But Naomi is not satisfied just painting patterns. She wants to help earn money for her family. Like her best friend, Salamon, class for her family. When Naomi’s father helps her earn money for her family, she draws on her resourceful nature and her skills to bravely save the day.

- Ask students, “Did they help Naomi and why or not? Did they agree with the choices the characters made? What would they have done if they were in their position?”

- Naomi is in my shoes. She had to go to school because her parents wouldn’t allow her to send both she and her sister. Discuss the benefits of education for students and ask them if they would like to have school or not. What would they do?

- Naomi’s sister Ranaldo says, “I think it’s hard to grow up.” What do you think students think? Many children are excited to go up and plan on many things. Discuss with students what plans for the future include.

- Naomi’s mother’s golden bangle is priceless for two reasons—its an emergency, but it is also for her wedding. Ask students to think about their own wedding and how their families have family. Ask students if they have a present for their family or something they want to offer to their family.

- Naomi’s son Ramundo says, “I think it’s hard to grow up.” What do you think students think? Many children are excited to go up and plan on many things. Discuss with students what plans for the future include.

- Naomi was allowed to help her father by selling his Rickshaw for her when he was too old because she is a new. Her friend Salamon, however, did help her father because he is a boy. Naomi’s choice included selling the lamb, setting the table, and washing her father’s Rickshaw. Discuss the different roles daughters and sons play in students’ own family culture.
Lakshmi is a thirteen-year-old girl who lives with her family in a small hut on a mountain in Nepal. Her family is desperately poor, but her life is full of simple pleasures, like raising her black-and-white speckled goat and having her mother brush her hair by the light of an oil lamp. But when the harsh Himalayan monsoons wash away all that remains of the family’s crops, Lakshmi’s stepfather says she must leave home and take a job to support her family. Lakshmi is sold to a brothel and is trapped there by cruelty and cunning, unable to leave until her debt is paid. Written in spare and evocative vignettes, this powerful novel renders a world that is as unimaginable as it is real, and a girl who not only survives but triumphs.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. What is Lakshmi’s life like in her Nepal mountain home? What events create the need for her to go into the city?
2. Discuss the vignette entitled “Everything I Need to Know Now.” What do you think of the cultural mandates that she must live by? Compare it to the vignette of the same title that appears later when she is in the city. How does it represent all the changes in her life?
3. Did you suspect bad intentions on the part of the “auntie” and “uncle” who escorted Lakshmi? Why do you think Lakshmi herself was not suspicious? What does this show you about her character?

4. What things does Lakshmi wonder about on her journey? What ordinary objects fascinate her? How does this innocence help seal her fate?

5. How does Mumtaz gain control over Lakshmi? What tactics does she use to own her both physically and emotionally? What punishment does she exact on girls who disobey or betray her?

6. Describe the other girls and women in the brothel. How do they accept or rail against their lives there? What does Lakshmi learn from them? In the end, what happens to them?

7. For the festival of brothers and sisters, Harish gives Lakshmi a new pencil. This small act of kindness undoes her. Why do you think this “undoes” her? How do others reach out to help one another at the brothel?

8. What does despair look like? How does Lakshmi prevent her own despair from destroying her hope? Is it destroyed in others? How?

9. What happens when Monica leaves the brothel to return to the family she has supported? Do you think Lakshmi’s own ama would treat her the same way upon her return? What about her stepfather? What makes you think so or not?

10. What was the most disturbing part of this story for you? What facts crawled under your skin and continue to haunt you? Do you think there is anything you can do to help? What?

PROJECTS

LANGUAGE ARTS

Go to The New York Times online archives -- www.nytimes.com/2005/01/19/opinion/19kristofcambodia.html?ex=1147233600&en=f69e12d839fa55f7&ei=5070 – and read columns by Nicholas Kristof, a writer who literally bought the freedom of two prostituted girls in Cambodia and who proposes some solutions to the trafficking problem. Then write a letter to Kristof (nicholas@nytimes.com) or to your local paper.

Visit a few anti-trafficking Web sites, such as:
- www.satyamag.com/jan05/gupta.html, which includes an interview with filmmaker Ruchira Gupta, the director of The Selling of Innocents, a documentary about the marketing of women into the sex trade, or visit www.apneaap.org the Web site for Apne Aap, Gupta’s anti-trafficking organization.
- www.ijm.org, which details what the International Justice Mission is doing to rescue and rehabilitate trafficked girls.
- www.friendsofmaitinepal.org, which describes how people from all over the world are working to help stop trafficking in Nepal.

Then, write a letter to the editor of your local paper, your senator, congressperson, or other political figures to ask for their help in preventing the sex trade from continuing. Demand that funds to support the children and women who are rescued from the industry be allocated immediately.

Or write a letter imagining you have been trafficked, and this is your one chance to communicate with the outside world.
**MATH**
Nepal is one of the poorest countries in the world; the annual per capita income is about $300—roughly the same cost as an iPod. Compare the gross national product of Nepal to that of the United States and other countries. Compare the countries’ literacy rates and infant mortality rates. Make a graph showing the differences.

Lakshmi was initially sold for about 800 Nepali rupees. Determine the current exchange rate between U.S. dollars and Nepali or Indian rupees and calculate the amount for which she was sold. Bring this amount to life by making a list of things you and your family routinely buy for that amount.

Hold a fundraiser for Maiti Nepal or Apne Aap. It can be of any form you prefer—bake sale, car wash, walkathon, read-a-thon, etc. Break into small groups and compete to see whose idea nets the most donations. Graph your results and discuss which strategies were most successful.

Organize a toy and book drive for the children of the red-light district and donate your contributions to Maiti Nepal or Apne Aap. Ask local businesses for contributions and donations.

**ART**
Create a piece of art inspired by the book. The form—sculpture, painting, musical performance, etc. is entirely up to you. Chronicle your experience in a brief journal.

Imagine that you are going to leave home for a year to support your family. What would you pack? What items would be indispensable? Work those items into some kind of art form—collage, sculpture, poem, song. How does your list compare with what Lakshmi carried?

Draw a map of Lakshmi’s travels.

**SOCIAL STUDIES**
Research the issues from the novel and create a poster, Web site, or pamphlet about what you learned. Be sure to include information for those who may be interested in getting involved.

Investigate various Web sites (including www.ecpatusa.org) to find out about the trafficking of children that is currently taking place here in the United States.

Show a film at your school: Born Into Brothels or The Day My God Died. Invite a speaker to your school, or find out how to organize a student group to push for change.

(www.ecpatusa.org/ECPAT-USA_StudentGuide.htm)

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**
To research Sold, Patricia McCormick traveled to India and Nepal, where she interviewed the women of Calcutta’s red-light district and girls who have been rescued from the sex trade. She is the author of the acclaimed novels Cut and My Brother’s Keeper. To hear Patricia McCormick reading an excerpt from Sold, visit hyperionteens.com
Appendix H: Beneath my Mother’s Feet, Simon & Schuster guide

Pre-Reading Activity

The title Beneath My Mother's Feet comes from one of the many sayings of the Prophet Muhammad about mothers: "The gates of heaven lie beneath the mother's feet." Elsewhere, another narrator reports that "I asked the Prophet who has the greatest right over a man, and he said, 'His mother.'" Clearly, mothers hold a special place in a Muslim household. Ask students to write a one-page essay about their mothers or another significant female relative.

Discussion Topics

1) We learn early on that Nazia likes school and has the respect of her teacher Ms. Haroon. How is her school similar to your school? How is it different? Why is Nazia so devastated when her mother pulls her out of school to work? Discuss the part school plays in Nazia's hopes and dreams.

2) As the book opens, we meet Nazia's neighbors and friends, Maleeha and Saira. As Nazia's circumstances change, she again meets her friends who respond to her in very different ways. When Nazia encounters Saira in the market, how does Saira react and what are her reasons for her behavior? What happens when Nazia asks Maleeha for help? Who is the better friend and why?

3) Soon Nazia must grow up fast to help her family stay together. She longs for her older brother, Bilal, to return home so she can "be a little sister again." What does she lose as she gains more responsibility? What does she find out about herself and the members of her family as each responds to his or her changing circumstances?

4) When her husband is unable to work, Amma must make choices to enable her family to live. How did your perception of Amma change as the book progressed? Discuss the relationship between Amma and Nazia, as well as the relationship between Amma and Abbu. At the end, where does Amma's loyalty lie?

5) Amma's concern for her daughter's jahez is her way of ensuring her daughter's future happiness. How do Amma's perceptions of her daughter's destiny change over the course of the book? Why does she keep the dowry money secret until the very end, even though the family had been reduced to pleading for a place to live?

6) When Nazia becomes friends with Sherzad, she loses some of her innocence as he tells her of his mother and his life of hardship. Why does Nazia risk everything to help
Sherzad escape? Do you think Sherzad succeeded in reaching his grandmother? How does Sherzad affect Nazia's understanding of her own mother and her decision to flee?

7) The dowry money will help Nazia, but perhaps the most important gift Amma gives her daughter is her blessing to leave. Why does Amma insist Nazia wait until the morning so that she can accompany her daughter? What does this have to do with "The gates of heaven lie beneath the mother's feet?"

Activities and Research

1) Most belief systems have specific guidelines on how to treat mothers. Research and record sayings about mothers in Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. Compare and contrast the findings. If you like, expand your search to Hinduism, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Shintoism.

2) Nazia's life changes dramatically when her father is injured. Chart her life expectations as the book opens (school, marriage at an early age, living in her uncle's house), then as she and her mother work as masis (continued work, no home of her own, unlikely to be married), and the life she chooses as the book closes (returning to school and all the possibilities that offers).

3) Stage a celebration for Nazia's return to school. Look up recipes and prepare chicken biryani, tikka (grilled spicy chicken), or gosht salan (meat curry) with raita (yogurt sauce) and roti (thin, unleavened bread). With the glossary as a reference, ask students to create signs that teach and illustrate the Urdu words for family members, thanks, clothing items, prayers, food, and greetings.

4) Learn about Pakistan. Ask students to research the history of Pakistan: how it was founded and its significant leaders in the present and recent past. Make a map of Pakistan and include Karachi. Given the clues in the book (near the Arabian Sea), where do you think the Defense district is? Note the border countries and the references in the book to people from those countries including Afghanistan and India.
Appendix I: The Roses in my Carpets, author’s guide

Student Exercise Sheet for Intermediate and Secondary Grades

Answer the following:

1. One of the basic rules of writing is show don’t tell’. i.e. Show the emotions of the characters, show their situation, don’t tell what they’re feeling. The word ‘poor‘ doesn’t occur at all in the text of the story. What are three ways the author has used to show that the family is poor?

2. A motif is a recurring element that has symbolic significance to the story. One of the motifs in the story is bread. It appears three times in the story. What are some other motifs of the story?

3. What does bread symbolize in the story? How does the author use the bread motif to illustrate the relationship between the main character and his sister and the condition of the family’s poverty?

4. At the end of the day the family is having bread and water for supper. What do you think the author was suggesting with the mention of bread and water?

5. How would this story be different if told through his sister’s eyes?

6. The boy says his father would never have taken money from a sponsor. The boy does, would you in these circumstances?

7. Imagine you had to work to support your family, what job would you be interested in learning about? Why?
Appendix J: *Four Feet, Two Sandals*, author’s guide

A TEACHER’S GUIDE FOR
FOUR FEET, TWO SANDALS

This teacher's guide is designed to assist you in creating talking points and ideas for classroom activities in conjunction with school visits.

THEMES IN THIS BOOK

- **Friendship**
  
  What is friendship? How can you be a true friend? Sometimes being a friend means having to give up something that is important to you. How do Lina and Feroza show their friendship for each other?

- **Sharing**
  
  Think of a time when someone shared something special with you. What do you have that you can share with others? What are ways you can share with others. Sharing does not always mean sharing a “thing”. We can share music, time to take a walk or to talk. We can share ideas and stories and problems. Lina and Feroza share their sandals. What else do they share with each other?

- **Refugees**
  
  People who flee their country and home because of fear of persecution are called refugees. The majority of refugees worldwide are children. What are some of the reasons that someone becomes a refugee? Can you give examples of why someone might become a refugee? Do you have refugee students in your school? Or in your town? Do you know where they come from? How can you help to make them feel welcome in their new home? What can you share with the refugees in your community?

  Teachers and student should refrain from referring to refugees as refugees. It should be used in the same manner as “immigrant,” you call them by name, not by status. This is to be sensitive to the feelings of refugee children so that they feel less like outsiders.

- **Loss**
  
  Lina and Feroza like all refugees have had to face many losses. Loss of home and country and family members. What losses have you had in your life? How do you learn to live with loss? What can you do to help others who have lost something or someone important to them?

www.karelynwilliams.com
A TEACHER'S GUIDE FOR FOUR FEET, TWO SANDALS
continued

THEMES IN THIS BOOK continued

• Separation
  In the end of the book, Lina and Feroza are separated. Have you ever had to be separated from someone who is important to you? How did that feel? Do you think Lina and Feroza will see each other again? Do you think they have hope? How does hope help?

SUBJECT AREAS IDEAS

• Social Studies: Girls in Pakistan sometimes decorate their hands with henna designs. Research these designs, the henna plant and the history and tradition of the art form. Trace your hand on a piece of paper. Make your own henna designs on the traced form.
• History: There have been refugees throughout the ages around the world. What other groups of refugees can you learn about from other parts of the world and other periods in history? What is the difference between a refugee and an immigrant?
• Geography: Find Afghanistan and Pakistan on a map. Think about how far refugees would have to walk from one country to the other. Would they have to pass over mountains? Rivers? What are the main cities of these two countries? What is the weather like in these countries?
• Art: Everyone in the class can design a sandal and draw a matching one. Cut the two sandals apart. Mix them up. Can you match the sandals? Make a pattern for this activity by tracing a sandal.
• Science: Environment and recycling. I have seen many people in third world countries wearing sandals made out of old tires. If you Google “sandals made from tires” you will find several sites that show how to use old tires to make a pair of sandals. See www.hollowtop.com/sandals.htm for instructions on how to make a sandal out of a tire. There are other websites that talk about making tire sandals too.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
Karen Williams is available to speak and share her stories on this and many of her other books. Please visit www.karelynwilliams.com for more information on the books and other information about Karen.