

How to evaluate children's literature

Important criteria to consider

- **Eye catching cover.** Does the book look inviting and interesting?
- **High quality texts,** well written with lively and engaging language. For example, there may be appropriate use of repetition and pattern or powerful and expressive language.
- **Illustrations should be supportive.** Photographs may offer rich and authentic images. Charts, maps and diagrams, with suitable captions, support learners in accessing complex texts.
- **Interesting and challenging themes,** relevant to the learners. Is the material exciting and interesting to children? It may invite them to solve problems, ask questions or investigate issues.
- **Drawing on experiences** within and beyond the classroom. Children need to be able to relate to the experiences in the text, seeing and reading about familiar situations. They also need to be introduced to the realities of the world beyond the classroom.
- **Valuing all peoples** – characters should be positively depicted and stereotypes challenged. The depiction of peoples and cultures beyond children's existing experience should be represented accurately and positively.
- **Authentic minority voices** are powerful in balancing views from the majority culture. Resources should reflect the fact that there is more than one viewpoint to any issue or experience.
- **Resources that are good for bilingual learners are good for all children¹**

1. These notes are adapted from the National Literacy Strategy Resources for children learning English as an Additional Language: criteria for selecting texts.