

Annenberg/CPB  
Professional Development Workshop Guide

# Teaching Multicultural Literature

## **A Workshop for the Middle Grades**

An eight-part professional development workshop for middle grade English language arts and humanities teachers

**Produced by Thirteen/WNET New York**

***Teaching Multicultural Literature: A Workshop for the Middle Grades***

is produced by  
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# About the Workshop

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## Overview

***Teaching Multicultural Literature: A Workshop for the Middle Grades*** explores a wide range of works, instructional strategies, and resources.

In eight one-hour videos, teachers from across the country model approaches that make multicultural literature meaningful for students in grades five to eight. As units unfold over time, students engage in critical discussions of race, class, and social justice that inspire them to take action for change. The featured teachers, along with leading educators, provide reflection and commentary throughout the programs. Authors share information about their writings through interviews and classroom visits.

The Web site supplements the video content with author biographies; synopses of the works; summaries of the video lessons; information on implementing the teaching strategies; student work samples; interviews with authors, teachers, and commentators; annotated bibliographies; and selected short works of literature featured in the workshop. The workshop guide includes discussion questions, activities, assignments, and guidance for facilitating professional development.

## Workshop Descriptions

### **Workshop 1. Engagement and Dialogue: Julia Alvarez, James McBride, Lensey Namioka, and more**

In New York City, Carol O'Donnell and her seventh-grade students explore themes of multiple worlds and dual identities. They read poetry by Diana Chang and Naomi Shihab Nye; James McBride's memoir *The Color of Water*; and essays and short stories by Gish Jen, Khoi T. Luu, Lensey Namioka, and Julia Alvarez; and watch Tina Lee perform a monologue. O'Donnell uses historical documents and a documentary video about the U.S. Census to provide context for the works. Through a series of innovative drama, role play, and writing activities, the students examine the social and cultural experiences of the characters and reflect on their own definitions and experiences of identity.

### **Workshop 2. Engagement and Dialogue: Judith Ortiz Cofer and Nikki Grimes**

The program begins with a profile of the writer Judith Ortiz Cofer and then moves to Vista, California, where Akiko Morimoto and her eighth-grade students read short stories by Ortiz Cofer. They respond personally to the works, examine the author's use of figurative language, and then make intertextual connections with books they've read throughout the school year. In a culminating project, the students create their own visual symbols to represent the characters and events in the text. They then explore works by Nikki Grimes and examine her craft as a writer. Grimes visits the classroom, answers questions about her work, and attends an after-school reading of student poetry.

### **Workshop 3. Research and Discovery: Shirley Sterling and Laura Tohe**

At the Skokomish reservation in Washington State, Sally Brownfield and her eighth-grade students study the literature and issues related to the Indian boarding school program through community involvement and self-examination. Brownfield begins with her students' questions and supports the students through a cycle of investigation, discussion, presentation, and reflection as they seek answers. The students use Shirley Sterling's novel *My Name Is Seepeetza* and the poetry of Laura Tohe as lenses through which to explore topics of their choosing. The class visits the Skokomish Tribal Center to interview tribal elders about the impact of the residential boarding program on the community. Author Shirley Sterling visits the class and answers students' questions related to her novel, her life, and their research topics.

# About the Workshop, cont'd.

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## **Workshop 4. Research and Discovery: Edwidge Danticat, An Na, Laurence Yep, and more**

In Clayton, Missouri, Kathryn Mitchell Pierce's sixth-grade students read works that explore issues of historical and contemporary immigration. Pierce uses "text sets" of multicultural picture books, poetry, and nonfiction to introduce the students to a wide range of perspectives and to set the stage for their novel study. The students choose, and then discuss in literature groups, novels by An Na, Edwidge Danticat, Walter Dean Myers, Pam Muñoz Ryan, and Laurence Yep. In culminating presentations, they synthesize themes and pose thought-provoking questions that invite others to examine these novels in new ways. This program features author profiles of Laurence Yep and Edwidge Danticat.

## **Workshop 5. Historical and Cultural Context: Christopher Paul Curtis**

Laina Jones and her sixth-grade students in Dorchester, Massachusetts explore *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* by Christopher Paul Curtis. Jones uses nonfiction, documentary film, and historical photographs to contextualize the events in the novel and the civil rights movement. The students make deep connections to the literature through drama, poetry, and creative writing activities. Curtis visits the classroom, addresses questions, and leads the students in a writing workshop. The unit culminates with a service learning project in which the students create children's books about the civil rights movement and share them with elementary school children.

## **Workshop 6. Historical and Cultural Context: Langston Hughes and Christopher Moore**

Stanlee Brimberg and his seventh-grade students in New York City study the recently discovered African Burial Ground in Manhattan through factual texts, video, art, photography, and poetry. The students interview writer, historian, and documentary filmmaker Christopher Moore to learn more about the experiences of African slaves in early New York. They examine the works of Langston Hughes and drawing on all of the texts, write their own poetry and engage in peer review. As a culminating activity, the students take a field trip to the African Burial Ground Memorial, then design their own postage stamps to commemorate the site.

## **Workshop 7. Social Justice and Action: Alma Flor Ada, Pam Muñoz Ryan, and Paul Yee**

Laura Alvarez and her bilingual fourth- and fifth-grade students in Oakland, California examine different perspectives and experiences of immigrants, and then formulate and defend positions on issues with which they connect personally. They examine *My Name Is María Isabel* by Alma Flor Ada, *Esperanza Rising* by Pam Muñoz Ryan, and *Tales From Gold Mountain* by Paul Yee, and compare characters' hopes, expectations, and actual experiences upon arriving in the United States. The students conduct research, which includes interviews with family members and nonfiction readings. Alma Flor Ada visits the classroom, answers questions about her novel, and facilitates a discussion about social justice and taking action for change. As a culminating project, the students write and revise persuasive letters to raise public awareness about the issues they've examined.

## **Workshop 8. Social Justice and Action: Joseph Bruchac and Francisco Jiménez**

This program begins with profiles of the featured authors, then moves to Chicago, Illinois, where Lisa Espinosa's seventh-grade students explore themes of representation through literature, documentary film, and photography. The students look critically at past and current media depictions of African Americans, Latino/as, and Native Americans, and examine ways in which artists and writers from within those cultural groups, including Joseph Bruchac and Francisco Jiménez, represent themselves. The students analyze the individual works, make comparisons across texts, and make connections to their own lives. In a culminating project, they represent their own experience through black-and-white photography and personal essays. Teachers, family, and community members gather at a local coffeehouse for an exhibit of the students' work.

# Workshop Components

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This guide provides everything you need to know to conduct this workshop, either with colleagues or on your own. The workshop consists of activities carried out with your colleagues on-site (Workshop Sessions) and those to do on your own (Between Sessions). See Helpful Hints for Facilitators on p. 4 for more information on preparing for group workshop sessions.

## Workshop Sessions (On-Site)

Weekly workshop sessions may be scheduled around live broadcasts; you should plan to begin at least 30 minutes before the scheduled broadcast. You may prefer to pre-record the programs on videocassette and schedule the sessions at a time that is convenient for all participants. Sessions work best when scheduled for a minimum of two hours. Before watching each video, you will engage in a pre-viewing discussion/activity related to the literature. These activities are designed to immerse you in an experience of the literature that is analogous to the way in which the students explore the literature in the video. Following each video, you will discuss the teaching strategies highlighted in the unit.

Each session consists of three parts:

### Getting Ready

In preparation for watching the program, you will engage in approximately 30 minutes of discussion and activity related to the literature featured in the video.

### Watch the Workshop Video

Watch the 60-minute video program.

### Going Further

Wrap up the workshop with an additional 30 minutes of discussion and activity related to the featured teaching strategies.

## Between Sessions (On Your Own)

### Homework Assignment

You will be assigned readings and activities to review ideas presented in the workshop session just completed and to prepare you for the next one.

### Ongoing Activities

Throughout the workshop, try incorporating the literature and strategies into your classroom instruction. To think about, apply, and extend what you've learned:

#### Keep a Journal

In your journal, include thoughts, questions, and discoveries you have as you review the online materials and reflect on the workshop. Note how your participation in the workshop session influenced you as a learner and as a teacher.

#### Visit the Web Site: [www.learner.org/channel/workshops/tml](http://www.learner.org/channel/workshops/tml)

Go online for materials and resources to deepen your understanding of the literature and the teaching practices shown in the workshop.

# Workshop Components, cont'd.

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## **Use the Online Activity**

The Interactive Strategy Workbook is an activity on the *Teaching Multicultural Literature* Web site that offers you a chance to reflect on the teaching strategies covered in the workshop. The activity features poems by Paula Gunn Allen and Dwight Okita. Read them and consider how you might adapt the teaching strategies to the poems and your students. Save your ideas in the workbook and return to the activity as you proceed through the workshop.

## **Share Ideas on Channel-Talk**

You can subscribe to an email discussion list and communicate with other workshop participants online. To subscribe to Channel-talkmsmultilit, visit:

<http://www.learner.org/mailman/listinfo/channel-talkmsmultilit>

# Helpful Hints for Facilitators

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## **Successful Workshop Sessions**

These guidelines will help you conduct successful workshop sessions, particularly the Getting Ready and Going Further segments. These 30-minute, pre- and post-video group discussions will help participants better understand the video programs and enhance the workshop experience. Getting Ready prepares participants to focus on the video programs; Going Further provides the opportunity to analyze and reflect on what they saw.

## **Designate Responsibilities**

Each week, someone should be responsible for facilitating the workshop sessions. This may be a professional facilitator or a volunteer from among the participants, or you may choose to divide and rotate duties among several participants.

## **Prepare for the Session and Bring the Necessary Materials**

The facilitator should review the entire workshop session in this guide, as well as the list of materials needed, prior to arriving for the session. (See p. 5 for the first session's preparation; for all other sessions, see the Homework Assignment from the previous session.) The facilitator will be responsible for bringing enough materials for all the participants, or alerting them about materials they should bring and assignments they should have completed. If you are viewing the programs on videocassette, the facilitator may want to preview them.



# Helpful Hints for Facilitators, cont'd.

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## Before the First Session

You may want to photocopy this guide for all the participants so they can follow along, refer to ideas covered in the session, and have their homework assignments handy. Or, you may direct them to the workshop Web site at [www.learner.org/channel/workshops/tml](http://www.learner.org/channel/workshops/tml) to print the guide themselves (direct them to Support Materials). Either way, you will want the participants to have the guide prior to the first session, so they will arrive prepared. They should:

- **Review** the entire workshop reading list (in the Appendix; see Support Materials) and purchase the required books or borrow them from the library.
- **Go to the workshop Web site** at [www.learner.org/channel/workshops/tml](http://www.learner.org/channel/workshops/tml).
- **Read** the Workshop 1 overview and information about the authors and literature (biographies, synopses, and key references).
- **Read** at least three of the following texts:

*(Note: Those marked with an \* are available online in the Workshop 1 Readings at [www.learner.org/channel/workshops/tml](http://www.learner.org/channel/workshops/tml); see Support Materials.)*

- "I Want To Be Miss América" by Julia Alvarez
- "What Means Switch" by Gish Jen\*
- "Family Ties: Exposing the Lighter Side of the Vietnamese American Experience" by Khoi Truong Luu\*
- *The Color of Water* by James McBride
- "The All-American Slurp" by Lensey Namioka
- "Half-and-Half" by Naomi Shihab Nye\*
- **As you read**, highlight or copy one or two quotations from each text that are meaningful to you. Record any questions that come up.
- **Bring your notes and copies of the Workshop 1 texts** to the first workshop session.

## Materials Needed

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Participants are asked to read texts and online materials in preparation for each workshop session. A reading list, including ISBNs, is included with each workshop session in this guide. The entire reading list for all eight workshop sessions can be found in the Appendix. Some of the short works featured in the programs are available on the workshop Web site ([www.learner.org/channel/workshops/tml](http://www.learner.org/channel/workshops/tml); see Support Materials, Workshop Readings). See the Homework Assignment for each workshop session to determine what works and/or texts participants will need.

# About the Contributors

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## Classroom Teachers

**Laura Alvarez** currently teaches a fifth-grade English/Spanish bilingual class at Melrose Elementary School in Oakland, California, where she has taught fourth and fifth grade for four years. Through her research and ongoing classroom inquiry, she is working to make her teaching practice more responsive to students' academic and linguistic needs in both their primary and second languages. Prior to teaching, Alvarez worked for the Bay Area Coalition of Essential Schools in Oakland.

**Stanlee Brimberg** teaches seventh-grade literacy and social studies at the Bank Street School for Children in New York City. In addition to teaching, Brimberg has developed curricula for the New York City Department of Education, created classroom resources for the *Scribner Literature Series*, and written lesson materials for several Web sites. Brimberg has also led teacher education workshops on creating curriculum using primary source materials.

**Sally Brownfield** has more than 20 years of classroom experience, including teaching at Hood Canal School in Shelton, Washington. She recently taught courses on children's literature to preservice teachers at Washington State University in Seattle. Brownfield currently provides consulting services to schools on Native American education. She is the author of *Motivating Native American Students: Strategies That Work* and *The Children: A Child Care Curriculum for Young Native Americans*.

**Lisa Espinosa** teaches language arts and science to seventh-graders at the Irma C. Ruiz School, a public school on the south side of Chicago. Espinosa has published articles about her teaching in *Rethinking Schools*. Additionally, she has lectured at Northeastern University on teaching Mexican American students in urban schools. She has received many awards and honors, including the Oppenheimer Grant for teaching, the Rochelle Lee Award, and a nomination for the Golden Apple Award for excellence.

**Laina Jones** teaches sixth-grade humanities at The Harbor School, an Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound School in Dorchester, Massachusetts. She serves on The Harbor School Governing Board and is a Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity (SEED) Leader. Jones also coaches the girls' basketball team, codirects the Girls' Rites of Passage program, and mentors students from her alma mater, the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Jones was nominated for the Disney Teacher Award.

**Akiko Morimoto** teaches seventh- and eighth-grade English at Washington Middle School in Vista, California. She is a National Board for Professional Teaching Standards-certified teacher in Early Adolescence English Language Arts. Morimoto currently serves as Vice President of the California Association of Teachers of English. She has served as the Middle Level Representative at Large on the Executive Committee of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and cochaired two of NCTE's national conventions.

**Carol O'Donnell** is a middle school English teacher and Outreach Director at Manhattan Country School, a K-8 independent school in New York City. O'Donnell has developed curricula founded on multiculturalism, social justice, academic and creative blossoming, and the richness of human identity. In addition, she has served as a Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity (SEED) leader and as cochair of the New York State Association of Independent Schools Diversity Committee.

**Kathryn Mitchell Pierce** is a sixth-grade literacy and social studies teacher and a writing instructional support specialist at Wydown Middle School in Clayton, Missouri. A former multi-age primary teacher and university faculty member, Pierce has published widely. Her research interests include the role of talk in supporting the learning process, the roles of literature in the curriculum, and the use of literature to promote critical conversations about issues of equity and social justice.

# About the Contributors, cont'd.

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## Scholars/Teacher Educators

**Joseph Bruchac, Ph.D.,** received an M.A. in literature and creative writing from Syracuse University, and a Ph.D. in comparative literature from the Union Institute of Ohio. Bruchac is a writer and storyteller who often draws on traditional Abenaki stories in his work. He has written and published over 100 books. Bruchac has volunteered as a teacher in Ghana, led writing workshops, and directed a college program in prisons. He has been a storyteller for Native American organizations and schools, including the Onondaga Nation School and the Institute of Alaska Native Arts. Bruchac founded a literary magazine, *The Greenfield Review*, and codirects the Greenfield Review Literary Center and The Greenfield Review Press. His honors and awards include the National Endowment for the Arts Writing Fellowship for Poetry, the Cherokee Nation Prose Award, the Hope S. Dean Award for Notable Achievement in Children's Literature, the Native Writers Circle of the Americas Lifetime Achievement Award, and the Virginia Hamilton Literary Award.

**Patricia Enciso, Ph.D.,** is an associate professor in the College of Education and the Latino/a Studies Program Coordinator at Ohio State University, where she teaches graduate courses in "critically engaged reading," multicultural literature, middle grade literacy methods, and Latino/a perspectives on critical theory, research, and practice. As an assistant professor at the University of Wisconsin—Madison, Enciso developed research and teaching related to multicultural literature in education. Her research on children's engaged reading and interpretations of cultural knowledge has been published in *Language Arts*, *Reading and Writing Quarterly*, *English Education*, *The Handbook of Research on Teaching the English Language Arts*, and *Making Race Visible: Literacy Research for Cultural Understanding*. She coedited *Theory Into Practice*, "Already Reading: Children, Texts and Contexts," and *New Directions in Sociocultural Theory: Power, Identity and Agency*. She has served as the chair of the Americas Award Committee for Latino/a children's literature and has coedited a regular review of children's literature for *The New Advocate*. Enciso was awarded a Spencer Postdoctoral Fellowship for work on the sociocultural landscapes of children's relationships, reading, and cultural knowledge.

**Jerome C. Harste, Ph.D.,** is professor of language education at Indiana University, and has the distinction of being the first Martha Lea and Bill Armstrong Chair in Teacher Education. A strong advocate of classroom-based research, Harste has been working with teachers over multiple years in an effort to collaboratively create the most conducive classroom environments possible for literacy learning. As the result of this work, he has become a spokesperson for literature-based teaching, inquiry-based education, critical literacy, and multiple ways of knowing curriculum. Harste has authored or coauthored numerous professional publications, including *Beyond Reading and Writing: Inquiry, Curriculum, and Multiple Ways of Knowing*; *Supporting Critical Conversations in Classrooms*; and *Creating Classrooms for Authors: The Reading–Writing Connection*. He is a children's author as well as the past president of the National Conference on Research in Language and Literacy, the National Reading Conference, the Whole Language Umbrella, and the National Council of Teachers of English.

**Valerie Felita Kinloch, Ph.D.,** is assistant professor of English education at Teachers College, Columbia University. Prior to this appointment, she was assistant professor of English, composition, and rhetoric at the University of Houston—Downtown. Her most recent work investigates democratic engagements, literacy practices, writing conventions/moves, and spatial affiliation in the education of diverse student populations. She is currently working on an educational biography on the life and literary contributions of scholar–activist–poet June Jordan. Kinloch coedited *Still Seeking an Attitude: Critical Reflections on the Work of June Jordan*, a collection of critical essays. Her writings have appeared in *Word*, *English Education*, *JAC (A Journal of Composition Theory)*, *Developmental Education and Urban Literacy Monograph*, *The Encyclopedia of the Harlem Renaissance*, and *College Composition & Communication* journal.

**Peggy McIntosh, Ph.D.,** is Associate Director of the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women and Founder and Codirector of the United States SEED (Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity) Project on Inclusive Curriculum. She consults widely with college and school faculty who want to create gender-fair and multicultural curricula, teaching methods, and school climates. In 1988, she published the groundbreaking article, "White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences Through Work in Women's Studies." McIntosh has taught at the Brearley School, Harvard University, Trinity College (Washington, D.C.), the University of Denver, the University of Durham (England), and Wellesley College. She is a cofounder of the Rocky Mountain Women's Institute, and has been consulting editor to *SAGE: A Scholarly Journal on Black Women*. In addi-

# About the Contributors, cont'd.

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tion to having two honorary degrees, she is a recipient of the Klingenstein Award for Distinguished Educational Leadership from Columbia University Teachers College.

**Sonia Nieto, Ph.D.,** is professor of language, literacy, and culture in the School of Education, University of Massachusetts, Amherst. She has taught students at all levels from elementary grades through graduate school, and for the past 30 years has focused on preparing teachers and teacher educators. Her research focuses on multicultural education and on the education of Latino/as, immigrants, and students of diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Her books include *Affirming Diversity: The Sociopolitical Context of Multicultural Education*; *The Light in Their Eyes: Creating Multicultural Learning Communities*; *Puerto Rican Students in U.S. Schools*; and *What Keeps Teachers Going?*; and she has published dozens of book chapters and articles in such journals as *Educational Leadership*, *The Harvard Educational Review*, *Multicultural Education*, and *Theory Into Practice*. She serves on several national advisory boards that focus on educational equity and social justice, including Facing History and Ourselves (FHAO) and Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR). She has received numerous awards for scholarship, advocacy, and activism, including the Outstanding Educator award from the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). Nieto was an Annenberg Institute Senior Fellow and has received two honorary doctorates.

**Tonya Perry** works at the University of Alabama at Birmingham as an instructor in secondary English language arts (grades 6–12). She taught middle school for 10 years and worked with high school students in various instructional capacities. Perry was awarded the Alabama State Teacher of the Year title in 2000–2001 and progressed to one of the four finalists for National Teacher of the Year. She has served on the National Council of Teachers of English Executive Board as the Middle School Representative-at-Large and writes a column for *English Journal*, a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) periodical. She is also a National Board-certified teacher.

## Lead Content Advisors

**Dale Allender** is the Associate Executive Director of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). He also directs NCTE's West Coast office, located on the campus of the University of California, Berkeley, where he teaches coursework in multicultural literature at the Graduate School of Education. Allender's scholarship includes work in multicultural literature, media literacy, and cultural studies. He serves on advisory boards for a variety of organizations, including Media Rights, The Independent Film Channel/Film School project, Scenarios, the Anti-Defamation League, and the Oakland Museum of California. Allender has served as lead advisor or advisory board member for several Annenberg/CPB professional development workshops for English language arts educators.

**Beverly Ann Chin, Ph.D.,** is Professor of English; Director, English Teaching Program; and former Director, Montana Writing Project at the University of Montana, Missoula. She has served as President of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), board member of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), and Secretary of the Conference on English Education (CEE). Currently, she is Member-at-Large of the Conference on English Leadership (CEL) and a member of the Assessment Advisory Committee of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL). A former high school English teacher, Chin has written articles and books on the teaching of reading and writing. In addition, she has edited and served as program advisor for several books on multicultural literature, including *Asian American Literature*, *Native American Literature*, *Hispanic American Literature*, and *African American Literature*, published by Glencoe/McGraw Hill; *Chinese-American Literature*, published by Globe; and *Dictionary of Characters in Children's Literature*, published by Franklin Watts. She provided commentary for the Annenberg/CPB workshop *The Expanding Canon: Teaching Multicultural Literature in High School*. A frequent keynote speaker and workshop presenter, Chin travels nationally and internationally to work with educators and students on English language arts standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment. She has received numerous awards for her teaching and service.

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