
Sharing Traditional and Contemporary Literature with Deaf Children

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ABSTRACT

THE CENTRAL IDEA OF SHARING literature will be discussed, along with suggestions for collection development, expanding students' knowledge of stories, book discussions, and physical considerations specific to a deaf audience. The deaf library patrons in the examples range in age from two-year-old children to teenagers.

INTRODUCTION

Only the very rarest kind of best in anything can be good enough for the young.

Walter de la Mare
(Lukens, 1990, preface)

In his landmark book, *Cultural Literacy*, author E. D. Hirsch, Jr. (1988) ignited an impassioned debate over whether children should acquire a shared body of knowledge and whether advocating such knowledge might reflect a biased or prejudicial view of the world. Common stories and shared well-known literature help individuals come to terms with the world—in essence, to “harmonize [their] lives with reality” (Campbell with Moyers, 1988, p. 4). In this article, the authors discuss criteria for selecting traditional and contemporary literature to share with deaf children. The book examples provided in Appendix A and B reflect the points of focus in the criteria.

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LIBRARY TRENDS, Vol. 41, No. 1, Summer 1992, pp. 61-84

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SHARING THE LITERATURE

In order for young people to appreciate the past, understand current issues, anchor their futures, express their viewpoints, and act accordingly, there must exist a commonality of that knowledge. In Mary Hoffman's (1991) recent offering *Amazing Grace*, we meet Grace, a child who loves stories. But even more than the stories themselves, she loves to act out the stories she hears. Readers can easily feel Grace's zest for this activity through her wonderfully expressive emotive face and lively imagination. Caroline Binch's illustrative interpretation of Grace as Anansi the Spider would be completely lost to readers and hearers alike if there were no cultural understanding of, or reference to, that character. It is not possible to appreciate Grace's rendition, nor comprehend what an exquisite performance she gives, if the audience does not know about Anansi. Likewise, the teller and the reader, in order to fully enjoy Grace's talents, should be versed in the other characters she plays—Joan of Arc, a Trojan Horse soldier, Hiawatha, Mowgli, Juliet, Aladdin, or her hardest gained role, Peter Pan.

To understand the discussion, it is important to define the literary terms used in this article as well as the authors' meaning of "sharing the literature." Several children's literature experts offer definitions and a breakdown of the numerous elements of folklore. Bernice Cullinan (1981) clumps folklore into three main categories: folk and fairy tales, fables, and myths (pp. 161-200). Both D. E. Norton (1978) and Charlotte Huck et al. (1979) spell out the divisions of folklore in more specific terms as indicated in Figure 1.

<i>Huck</i>	<i>Norton</i>
Folktales:	Folktales:
Cumulative	Cumulative
Beast tales	Beast tales
Pourquoi tales	Pourquoi tales
Realistic	Realistic
Wonder tales	Wonder tales and magic tales
Noodlehead tales	Humorous tales
Tall Tales and other Americana	
Fables	Fables
Myths	Myths
Epic and legendary heroes	Legends
Bible	

Figure 1. Comparison of folklore elements in *Huck's* and *Norton's* children's literature textbooks.

In the definitions of the literary terms, no presupposition is made on anyone's belief. The aforementioned authorities, with assistance from *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* (1985), helped to streamline the interpretations of the terms used in preparing the article and, subsequently, the Appendixes.

Literary Tale

A *literary tale* is a story written down from the beginning. The classic examples of literary tales are stories by the Danish raconteur, Hans Christian Andersen, who created and recorded the stories. When using literary tales, they must be used as written. To change just one word changes the concept of the tale.

Fairy Tale

A *fairy tale* is a simple narrative that deals with supernatural beings. A fairy tale also contains magic and relates information about a culture. Although the well-known version of the story of Cinderella and her glass slipper only dates from its publication in Perrault's book of tales at the end of the seventeenth century, the spirit of the story goes back as far as the division of society into classes of rich and poor, ruler and ruled (Whalley, 1972, p. 49). Through the reading of *The Egyptian Cinderella* by Shirley Climo (1989), *Yeh-Shen* by Ai-Ling Louie (1982), and *Tattercoats* by Joseph Jacobs (1965), children have the opportunity to contrast how the familiar story is told in similar fashion in different countries. The true magic of the fairy tale lies not only in the magic that takes place in the tale but also in the acquiescence of the reader and/or listener to believe, if only for the duration of the story, the events that unfold.

Folktale

A *folktale* is an anonymous, timeless, and placeless tale circulated orally. In contrast to fairy tales, there is no magic. Incidents have a plausible explanation. In the case of the folktale, the language represents the vernacular. It specifically tells us something about the culture. *Tom-Tit-Tot* (1974), one folktale version of the Rumpelstiltskin story, accurately conveys the Appalachian old-English charm of its English, Irish, and Scottish roots. Within the familiar framework, a hapless miller's daughter becomes a lazy worthless child. A father's proud boast becomes a mother's lament. Timing and circumstance become dumb luck. All of the new elements proceed to the final happy ending. Language, naming customs, beliefs, and traditions define and detail the basic outline.

Myth

A *myth* is an explanation of ostensibly historical events that serve to unfold part of a world view of a people or explain a practice,

belief, or natural phenomenon. The myth encompasses creation stories and *pourquoi* tales. Stories such as Aardema's (1975) *Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears*, Climo's (1988) *King of the Birds*, and the wonderful tales of Rudyard Kipling in which he provides explanations for events—e.g., “How the Leopard Got His Spots”—offer justification for these questions of “how” and “why.” Some creation stories are *pourquoi* stories. Many cultures offer their explication of the creation of the world and the objects in it which is different from the biblical or scientific interpretation. Classic examples of these creation tales are captured in Virginia Hamilton's (1988) *In the Beginning: Creation Stories From Around the World*.

Legends

Legends are stories coming down from the past—one popularly regarded as historical but not verifiable. The many versions of Johnny Appleseed or of John Henry portray a true legend. They attempt to reflect deeply held beliefs while trying to relate to another culture. Examples of legends that connect a historical event, but one which cannot be verified, are *Why There Is No Arguing in Heaven* by Deborah Nourse Lattimore (1989) and *Paul Bunyan: A Tall Tale* by Steven Kellogg (1984).

When discussing contemporary folkloric literature, one reference might be to stories that draw on the elements of traditional folklore written within the time, framework, and culture (rural and urban) of our modern society. A story such as Van Allsburg's (1986) *The Stranger* is an example of a contemporary tale. There is a farm in the story, but the farm is definitely a recognizable twentieth-century American farm.

Fractured fairy tales, such as *The Frog Prince Continued* and *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*, both by Jon Scieszka (1991, 1989), represent a contemporary approach to traditional literature. These stories contain fairy tales with an unusual perspective or twist, told within the time, framework, and culture of today's society.

Sharing literature establishes the relationships among the story and the teller, the teller and the audience, and the audience and the story. “To share implies that one as the original holder grants to another the partial use, enjoyment or possession of a thing” (Merriam-Webster, 1985, p. 1082). To paraphrase, the act of reading aloud or telling a story means that the teller or reader grants to the listener the enjoyment of a story. The reader or hearer can privately absorb a story and fully appreciate one or more levels of enjoyment simultaneously.

CHOOSING AND SHARING THE LITERATURE

This article outlines ten considerations when choosing and sharing traditional and contemporary literature with deaf children. These points of focus include:

1. selection and presentation;
2. emotional needs of the child;
3. images of the culture;
4. basic time frames;
5. how well the child is prepared for the stories;
6. access points to the story;
7. versions and translations of the stories;
8. how literal is the story and what are the levels of interpretations;
9. illustrations; and
10. didacticism.

Selection and Presentation

When using traditional and contemporary literature with deaf children, the process as well as the content is important. While this article is not an instructional guide, its intent is to offer recommendations for school and public librarians to consider in welcoming the deaf child into the library.

Definite selection criteria should be applied when choosing books to use with any child in any setting. However, deaf children are more wedded to analogous conceptual and contextual cues than their hearing counterparts. For deaf children, therefore, the case is even stronger for careful selection of appropriate materials. For starters, choose books that have a focused plot line. Too many subplots, too many characters, and too much information only serve to confuse the recipient. One book that works extremely well is *Caps for Sale* by Esphyr Slobodkina (1947). The peddler awakens to find that some mischievous monkeys have taken his caps while he napped. There are only a few characters and a simple plot. In addition, this tale possesses a well-paced rhythm for reading aloud, humor, teasing, nicely controlled vocabulary, and smooth conceptual transitions.

For a deaf audience, vision is a crucial element. Give time to the illustrations. Sharing the pictures requires a broad visual range. The teller needs to see the text and pictures. The listener needs to see the teller or interpreter. The listener must also absorb the concepts visually related (signed) and their relationship to the picture.

There are several ways for the teller/reader to physically handle a book when sharing the contents with a group of deaf youngsters. One way is to place the book on a chair or holder at the teller's side. This frees the hands completely to sign fluently and gesticulate dramatically. With older children, it is often preferable to place the

book in the lap. This allows the sharer of the information to "tell" or sign the words to the audience while directly facing them. After the telling, the presenter may then show the pictures to the group. The pictures should be slowly exhibited in order for all members of the audience to absorb the visual messages. Visual comfort and clarity are necessities: eye level is a vital factor for toddlers while young children need every visual advantage to ensure enjoyment.

Emotional Needs of the Child

Remember that it is important to attend to physical and emotional needs as well as literature development when selecting books for young readers and listeners. Children identify their own emotions through the characters in children's books. They may read about a child who covets a toy in a store, such as the little girl, Lisa, does in *Corduroy* by Don Freeman (1968). Perhaps while reading about Frog and Toad in one of Arnold Lobel's many tales featuring these two lovable characters, children may see their own daily problems—a lost button from a jacket or a reprimand for eating too many cookies (N. Hands, personal communication, February 26, 1990).

Children may experience an unknown world through books. Sometimes that unknown world exists in an imaginary place. At other times books help children understand their own environment or place in the universe. No matter what appeals to a child, books offer opportunities to create images and to enrich a child's emotional life that may remain in his or her mind throughout life. These emotional connections include:

1. the need to be small in the world;
2. the need for love and reassurance;
3. the need for friendship;
4. the need for power and to have control over happenstance;
5. the need to stay the same age with no responsibility;
6. the need for humor;
7. the need to be quiet;
8. the need for imagination;
9. the need to believe in things that are not real; and
10. the need to feel a sense of history and be in a family and community.

These sentiments need no complicated interpretation. They exist in each child and remain through adulthood. For each emotion, there are hundreds of stories that speak to one or more of the human needs.

The attention span and amount of vocabulary that is understood must be considered for the youngest participants. Incomparable books for toddlers include titles by Donald Crews, Tana Hoban, Ann Jonas,

and Anne Rockwell. There are few words on the page, so the teller is able to memorize them. This gives the teller the opportunity to look fully at the children to command their attention and address the story. The teller then can move about, rearrange chairs, or introduce creative dramatics to enhance the story.

Images of the Culture

The central aspect of literature across cultures is the folktale. The central component in folktales is the image of the culture. Some of these images of culture are: anthropomorphism, literature as literature, literature as theater, and a specific time and place.

Anthropomorphism assigns human form, personality, or actions to that which is not human. Characters in anthropomorphized fairy tales help children explore their fears in a polarized (all good or all evil) way (Bettelheim, 1977, p. 74). Through anthropomorphism, children explore human nature. In any version of *The Three Bears*, children recognize that Papa Bear, Mama Bear, and Baby Bear all have very definite personalities. Because animals in folklore have only one or two representative traits, the story remains uncluttered. Listeners identify the character's personality, idiosyncrasy, or quirks and are thus able to digest the story based on their own life experiences. A prime example of this is the folktale Hansel and Gretel. When the wicked witch goes into the oven, children cheer the action thereby reinforcing the maxim. Good is rewarded and evil is punished with no reaction of remorse from the readers.

Literature as literature helps readers come to life. A single reader or participant can privately absorb a story. Two or more people can discuss the words heard or read by the two of them and experience a more complete sharing. For example, *Jack and the Beanstalk* (Pearson, 1989) is a clever and satisfying story when read silently. However, reading the words aloud adds a rhythm and cadence to the story that catapults the meaning to a higher level of understanding and enjoyment.

Literature as theater is more visual and involves a number of elements all working in cyclical motion. Besides introducing concepts like optimism and courage, folktales are the basis of many cultural and literary references found in contemporary literature, films, and theatrical productions. "According to Marilyn Iarusso, New York Public Library, 'Open, Sesame,' 'Beauty and the Beast,' and 'Cinderella' are concepts as much as they are titles and phrases from stories" (Taub, 1984, p. 64). When the story is in the readers' minds, they are able to relate it to happenings in their lives. "It gives you perspective on what's happening to you" (Campbell, 1988, p. 4). If that ability is lost, if readers, indeed, have no cultural literacy, then

they have really lost all guidelines and will have to work everything out for themselves.

The full range of this theatrical sharing of literature includes videotaping, storytelling, reading aloud, booktalking, and programs of shared inquiry—such as Junior Great Books—or specific to the deaf community—the addition of the element of American Sign Language (ASL). Sign language enables the deaf child not only to share the literature but also to share a culture as it is transmitted, understand the differences in a culture, gain a frame of reference, develop a foundation for future reference, and view the world from a very specific point of view. Remember that librarians are not taking a body of literature and feeding it to the deaf community but are including deaf children as recipients of this communication of folklore. Folklore is on stage here, and the deaf person is a member of the human audience.

Cultural literacy helps establish us in a time and place. This occurs in both traditional and contemporary literature. In *Silent Lotus* by Jeanne M. Lee (1991), deafness transcends a time period. The characterization appeals to deaf as well as to hearing *children* as *children*, as opposed to hearing children versus deaf children.

Basic Time Frames

American Sign Language concepts become the real connectors in establishing time and place for the nonhearing world. The teller must depict the big picture first and then give the details. In Keiko Kasza's (1987) *The Wolf's Chicken Stew*, it is imperative to set the scene first. What is the name of the wolf? What is he doing? What does he look like? The teller, comparable to a stage director, must first set the scene so that the receiver really visualizes the wolf in a ready-to-pounce position with his claws out. Then the listener is ready for more information—that the wolf plans to eat the chicken for his dinner.

In a more traditional tale, such as the *Snow White* translated by Paul Heins (1974) with illustration by Trina Schart Hyman, the wicked Queen and the place of evil must be staged first. In this version, the Queen is an enchantingly beautiful queen with long silken tresses. However, she is also an arrogant and jealous mother who is threatened by the beauty of her own stepdaughter. Mother is a positive and loving image in literature. Therefore, the Queen cannot become wicked until she physically goes into a hidden deserted room to create a poisonous apple. The room represents the evil space. When she visits Snow White to offer her the apple, the listener needs to visualize the house. The last scene that is blocked is the frightened little girl opening the door to meet evil. Ultimately, the teller or interpreter

has the power to control the story. If visualization is provided in a logical broad-to-specific order, then a positive, enriched, culturally accurate sharing of literature has transpired.

Prior Preparation for the Story

The fifth access point to consider in sharing literature with deaf children is the degree to which the teller and the listener are prepared for the telling. Assume nothing. Are the children acquainted with the literary references and nursery rhyme characters in *The Jolly Postman* (Ahlberg, 1986)? Are they part of the joke? If so, then the enjoyment is guaranteed. If there is no understanding or recognition, then the little jokes are all lost.

What cultural allusions from past folklore are brought into contemporary society? Will today's children be able to relate to the grandmother in the recent Sondheim and Lapine (1988) hit musical *Into the Woods* if they have no basis in fairy tales? Will they understand grandmother's admonishment about not talking to strangers or straying off the path if they have never heard or read any version of *Little Red Riding Hood*?

Tellers must be as committed to the content of the folklore as they are to the telling. What does this involve? First, it is important to note that preparation should involve an understanding of the visual imagery and emotional impact on a child. For example, what mental pictures are invoked when a child hears about Rapunzel's prince jumping out of a tower? What is involved emotionally? Is the audience old enough to understand the reality of what has just been communicated? Did the prince hurt himself? Will he be all right? If the teller has not prepared the listener for this circumstance, then the teller may have to deal with a greater emotional trauma. Consider the act of Rapunzel walking away with her own children. How do you explain their sudden appearance? How were they born? Who is their father? It behooves the teller to know what is involved so that the audience may receive the information appropriately.

When sharing literature with deaf children, tellers must do some preliminary homework. They must understand the audience and research the story if necessary. Every group is different and all dissimilarities must be considered (Kimmel, 1981). To some, *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* is explained by the Black Plague and the death of children, to others, it is a reference to the Children's Crusade and the disappearance of children. A traditional Mexican folktale, such as Aardema's (1991) *Borreguita and the Coyote*, may interest fifth or sixth graders, but it will not hold the attention of a young audience just learning to communicate in the deaf language and new to storytelling or being read aloud to for a lengthy period of time.

Similarly, toddlers usually relate well to stories about little furry animals, but the upper-level readers and listeners will be put off by such puerile offerings. Tellers must consider themselves as well as their audience; if tellers do not relate to a story, then neither will their audience.

Second, the teller's level of cultural awareness is even more consequential than that of the audience. Unfortunately, when literature is missing in the early stages of life, it is often missing in adulthood. Meredith Willson's (1957) delightful duet, "The Sadder-But-Wiser Girl" from the Broadway hit *The Music Man*, is a prime example of what happens when there is a dearth of cultural knowledge in an experienced mature life. Without familiarity with Nathaniel Hawthorne's (n.d.) *The Scarlet Letter*, the listener completely loses the meaning of Willson's superbly honed lyrics, "I hope and I pray for Hester to win just one more A." Furthermore, the listener cannot make the connection between the lyrics and the novelty of the relationship between Marian the Librarian and Professor Harold Hill or appreciate the genius of the language. To the uninformed, the song is just another zippy song with rhyming words.

Similar connections exist when sharing stories with deaf children. Deaf children must be given every possible association in order for them to connect what exists in their own small world with what exists in literature. For example, Sheila Burnford's (1961) *The Incredible Journey*, offers all children, including the deaf child, the opportunity to relate to the tale in many ways: as an odyssey of the courage and endurance of two dogs and a cat who overcome obstacles to return home; as a story of a family who loves the animals; as a narrative of a stranger who takes care of these stray animals; and as a history of the logging industry in Canada.

The physical preparation of a story for deaf children is significant. It helps to establish the scene of the story, it gives the children an opportunity to adjust to the storyteller's manner of presentation, and it provides a certain set of details that will provide an adequate amplitude for enjoyment. Once this atmosphere has been set, the story proper can begin.

"Once upon a time," "In a certain country," "A thousand years ago, or longer," "At a time when animals still talked," "Once in an old castle in the midst of a large and dense forest"—such beginnings suggest that what follows does not pertain to the here and now that we know. This deliberate vagueness in the beginnings of fairy tales symbolizes that we are leaving the concrete world of ordinary reality. The old castles, dark caves, locked rooms one is forbidden to enter, impenetrable woods all suggest that something normally hidden will be revealed, while the "long ago" implies that we are going to learn about the most archaic events. (Bettelheim, 1977, p. 62)

Deaf children are literal. Literature helps them get past that stumbling block. The unfreezing of the imagination through the beginnings of the narratives invites an audience with that need into the world of make believe.

Deaf children increasingly understand how to recognize a resolution through exposure to an abundance of literature. Narrative endings such as “they lived happily ever after,” “the giant is killed,” “the princess is saved from the dragon,” and “she ran off never to be seen again” leave no doubt in the child’s mind. For this reason, it is always best to end the story on a definite note.

Access Points to the Story

Without meaning to sound redundant, it is important to emphasize that the access points of a story must also be considered when addressing the access points of sharing literature. To paraphrase, sharing the literature is the ability to take a fairy tale, a legend, or a myth, and relate it to the real world and the listener’s perception of reality. These avenues of approach include: (1) geography, (2) commonality, (3) prior knowledge of a country or a time period, (4) costumes and native dress, (5) setting, (6) the book cover, and (7) the language of the text.

Multicultural connections are forged through geography. Can the setting of the story be pinpointed? Or is it simply a fictitious location awaiting myriad interpretations based on the listener’s imagination? In *The Enchanted Tapestry*, by Robert San Souci (1987), the youngest son has a deep love and respect for his mother and her craft. This affinity is the access point to the story for a young child who can really relate to the adoration of a parent. This is true for a hearing child but is especially important for a deaf child. That connection makes the story more personal, allowing the deaf child to relate to a Chinese child and understand his or her similarities with that child. There is a recognition of a commonality. Also, the child, particularly if there are illustrations involved, will begin to recognize aspects of Chinese culture so that, when introduced to a second story that is described in a similar land, there is familiarity of that culture.

Prior knowledge of a country or a time period is another element of passageway into a story. When experiencing *Jack and the Beanstalk* (Kellogg, 1991), the mother is often described or visualized in a long dress. This manner of dress is indicative of the time period. Costumes or native dress can be indicative of the story’s country of origin. Consider the many variants of the *Cinderella* story. *The Egyptian Cinderella* by Shirley Climo (1989) introduces us to a slave girl, Rhodopis, married to Pharaoh Amasis. Rhodopis has blond hair,

green eyes, and rosy cheeks. The other servants scorn her because she is different. When her Cinderella dream is fulfilled, Pharaoh declares her the most Egyptian of all: "For her eyes are as green as the Nile, her hair as feathery as papyrus, and her skin the pink of a lotus flower." The English version of the same story features a variety of fair haired beauties. *Yeh-Shen*, by Ai-Ling Louie (1982), a Cinderella story from China, portrays a protagonist with Oriental features. In addition to Yeh-Shen's appearance, the reader discovers the culturally significant Chinese fish motif in beautiful pastel and paint illustrations. Previous knowledge of these cultures conjures up a mental picture of the characters and helps children understand differences in appearance.

Setting is the fourth point of entry to the account. Does it take place in a castle? Is the location a farm, and, if so, where is the farm? Remember the importance of stimulating listeners' minds when preparing them for a story. Give them the information they need. If there is no reference source to indicate a people or country, then the teller must apprise the listener of the situation and create the access point for them. For example, in the tale *Bringing the Rain to Kapiti Plain* by Verna Aardema (1981), no certification can be found to substantiate the existence of the Nambia people in Kapiti Plain. First of all, the teller must take the time to establish the authenticity of the characters and location and, second, share that with the audience for a better appreciation of the narrative.

A popular axiom admonishes us not to judge a book by its cover. However, for children in both hearing and deaf populations, the cover is influential and should be considered when selecting literature to share. According to children's librarians and booksellers, a book's jacket or cover can solely determine whether or not a potential reader will ever pick it up (Feldman, 1991, p. 46). *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughter*, by John Steptoe (1987), *King of the Birds* by Shirley Climo (1988), *The Llama and the Great Flood* by Ellen Alexander (1989), and *Lon Po Po* by Ed Young (1989) are all choice examples of literature often discovered because of attractive and alluring covers. In the past twenty years, the trend to highlight folktales in a single title package with an eloquent jacket as opposed to inclusion in an antiquated anthology has been a boon to both contemporary and traditional literature. Keith Baker's (1989) *The Magic Fan*, Ann Grifalconi's (1986) *The Village of Round and Square Houses*, and Fred Marcellino's (1990) recent award-winning *Puss in Boots* are examples of books that do this by provoking the reader visually.

The last story accessible factor to ponder is that of language. Basically, the question is In what language is the story presented?

This leads to the next point in the overall discussion of access points in sharing literature—versions and translations.

Versions and Translations

Most awards for children's books and other materials are given on the basis of adult evaluation. The standards by which adults judge are often different from the standards by which children choose materials (Carter & Harris, 1981, pp. 54-58). While books should be readily available in libraries for those children who might not otherwise see them, the library does not need every edition of a story. The selection of the proper items to include in a collection is another investigation altogether. However, there are five points to consider: (1) schlock versus quality, (2) collections versus single editions, (3) vernacular, (4) repetition, and (5) the crossover of culture.

With today's exquisitely illustrated picture books, it is inconceivable that anyone would willingly choose a supermarket "bulk literature" product (Landsberg, 1987, pp. 232-33). Most of these are generic computer-generated items. The stories are often trite and have little value. There is a place for these pop culture items. However, children deserve to be exposed to the finest and loveliest forms of the written word and illustrations, which explains the success of works that demonstrate quality writing and illustrating. "The merits of many Disney productions [and others of similar quality] are undeniable; he adapted the accepted works and classics in a medium which has a popular appeal and a ready audience" (Finch, 1975, pp. 17-18).

Even classics have been subjected to schlock interpretation. Over the years, C. Clement Moore's celebrated poem, "The Night Before Christmas," has endured the weakest artists' and computer-generated pictures. Generally speaking, when presented with all of the stunning interpretations of this time-honored tale—from the charming traditional rendition by Tasha Tudor (1975) to the whimsical, most recently published *Grandma Moses' Night Before Christmas* (1991)—children prefer and deserve the better quality items. Children deserve the best. This starts with the stories and pictures in their lives. What a sad world, indeed, if children completely disregarded Ernest Shepard and Roberto Innocenti's versions of *Winnie-the-Pooh* or *Pinocchio*. This is especially true for deaf children. Quality illustrations create the strongest and most memorable impressions.

Libraries *do* need anthologies with stories that are appropriate for children. However, anthologized editions are not particularly successful with deaf audiences. A good signer can sell the story if the majority of interpretation is memorized and the teller can maneuver facially and physically to maintain attention. Over the

past thirty years, the addition of illustrations to stories culled from anthologies have made the world of story even more accessible to children of all ages and needs. However, other matters should be considered. Introduce youngsters to the creatively constructed picture books of traditional and contemporary literature so that they will want to seek the stories out themselves—even in an anthology.

A note of personal observation about the use of anthologies in sharing literature with the deaf community seems in order here. We have just related the fact that anthologies do not work well with storytelling for the deaf. However, the beautifully designed, generously illustrated, highly readable anthology, *Michael Foreman's World of Fairy Tales* (Foreman, 1991), has recently arrived in bookstores and is receiving considerable acclaim with readers and tellers of all ages; it is destined to be a classic. The potential trend is worth observing.

Not all writing works well for all storytellers. Dialect and vernacular is difficult to convey. Not everyone can tell a B'r'er Rabbit story. Neither can everyone be proficient in communicating a Hans Christian Andersen tale that requires almost no tampering with the text. However, because there are enough titles with pictures to help detail the text, there will always be colloquial traditional tales and contemporary literature to share. Two elegant picture books with patois that work are Robert San Souci's (1989) *The Talking Eggs*, handsomely illustrated by Patricia Polacco, and William H. Hooks's (1990) *The Ballad of Belle Dorcas*, which contains striking woodcuts to help convey the message.

The fourth consideration in selecting a particular version or translation is one of repetition. Repeated choruses, such as "Fee, fi, fo, fum"—for which signs should be established before the telling—and repetitious action provide a strong sense of movement and direction in a narrative. Also, visual repetition, as in Jan Brett's (1989) *The Mitten*, helps establish familiarity in an audience's mind. Repetition is a fine teaching tool and allows for the audience to participate simultaneously with no preconceived notions about sound or sight.

As previously noted, literature is theater. The telling of the story allows for a natural progression to creative dramatics and is especially applicable with recapitulated movement. This is demonstrated well in *The Carrot Seed* by Ruth Krauss (1945), in which a number of characters, introduced one by one, hang on to one another to pull a large carrot from the ground. The more actively involved in a story children become, the more it is remembered and stored away for future use.

With the current wave of multicultural awareness, it is vital to mention the cross-language aspect of versions and translations. How literal is the story, and what are the levels of interpretation? When telling stories to a deaf audience, there are a number of transactions happening simultaneously: the literature has appeared in an original language; it is translated to English; it is transferred to sign; and it is rendered to the deaf audience, often with the help of illustration. How well this final version of the tale is transmitted, either through the teller/interpreter or the teller and interpreter, depends on how faithful the teller is to the original and how well the story has been interpreted. How successfully the story is relayed also depends on the use of American Sign Language. ASL is the preferred mode in the continuum of signing strategies because it alone is a member of the family of human languages.

Literal Interpretations

Signed English, an inaccurate form of both English and ASL, is a feeble attempt by so many well-intentioned storytellers to include deaf children in one of their services. This is a common mistake. The assumption is that Signed English and ASL are interchangeable. If there is one piece of advice to be offered to anyone interested in sharing literature with deaf children, it is *Do not fake signing*. If the teller is not proficient with signs, he or she should admit it. It is insulting to deaf audiences and lessens the credibility of the teller in terms of offering any real service to deaf persons in the library community if the storyteller pretends to sign to deaf children.

Signed English does not work in interpreting a folktale for deaf children for several reasons. The word order is not readily understood and the literalness of the language can be confusing to the receiver. Consider the concept of "have to" in a story such as *Little Red Riding Hood*. If mother says to Little Red Riding Hood, "You *have to* take this bread to Grandmother," then the teller cannot sign in perfect English word-for-word telling because it will mean nothing to the receiver. If the teller conceptualizes the term, as is the process in ASL, and signs, "You *must* take this bread to Grandmother," then the audience can relate and will fully understand the command.

For Paul Goble's (1978) version of *The Girl Who Loved Wild Horses*, conceptual accuracy is paramount. The story is set in reality, but as the girl follows the horse, the setting shifts from reality to fantasy. When interpreting this action, how well, conceptually, does the transition take place? It is imperative that storytellers keep the deaf audience with them as the transition is made. If the signs are word for word instead of concept for concept, the listener will lose the story. *Buffalo Woman* (Goble, 1984) is another sample of a story

that cannot be offered in Signed English terms. This is especially true for the climax and ending of the story. The concepts have to remain true to one another, as closely matched as possible. If the teller is going to use signs, then the correct conceptual signs must be used.

Recently an enlightened vision of the country's multicultural heritage has taken hold. No longer is a "forced" change of culture so widely advocated. Instead, this new vision acknowledges that a dominant culture does exist within certain contexts, but it also calls for a profound appreciation and fostering of the native cultures of people not born into the dominant culture. (Rasinski & Padak, 1990, p. 576)

In sharing literature, one common denominator connecting the dominant (hearing) and subdominant (deaf) cultures is that of illustration. The book's artwork benefits the deaf community slightly more than the hearing community because it serves as the explanation of the text and as a stimulant for the imagination in a culture that needs a less literal vision of the world. For hearing people, the pictures and photos merely expand the meaning of any given text.

Illustrations

In most circumstances, illustrations initially attract a reader to a story. What appears on the page can clarify a concept as well as any word or phrase. There are three points to consider in connecting illustration and folklore: (1) how does the illustration develop the character and sustain the image? (2) how does the illustration make the reader want to turn the page? and (3) how does the illustration show respect for the listener and for the culture represented in the story? Illustration must be an interpretation of words and not just an ornament.

When selecting books for deaf children, the teller should look for illustrations that are visible on the same page as the text, or, as in the case of a double-paged spread, as close to the illustration as the turning of the page. There is nothing more confusing to a child than to have a teller share a story then show an illustration that does not match. Books that work well in this capacity have the pictures match what is revealed in the text and are placed so well in the book that as soon as the teller speaks the words, the visual image reinforces them.

One of the dangers inherent in exquisitely illustrated retellings or adaptations is that the simplicity and straightforwardness of the folkloric element gives way to a product that is "slick, overly sophisticated, precious, or excessively embellished...sometimes the charm of the language of the original folk literature disappears, to be replaced with charmingly attractive illustrations, which are a joy to behold, but which wreak havoc with the linguistic art on which

they are based" (Anderson & Groff, 1972, p. 165). Nevertheless, "the art in children's books helps the child develop a sense of aesthetics. Book illustrations may be the young child's primary source of exposure to art. Consequently, artists must accept the responsibility to give children their highest conception of what is beautiful" (Hands, 1986, p. 7). Because of the multitude of visual stimuli characteristic of today's electronic age, children need to be exposed to quality in art at an early age in order to make aesthetic choices in adolescence, in adulthood, and in more mature years.

Contemporary artists such as Paul Goble, Stephen Gammell, Patricia Polacco, Paul Zelinsky, and Trina Schart Hyman, as well as the earliest illustrators of tales such as Arthur Rackham, Beatrix Potter, Howard Pyle, Kate Greenaway, and Richard Caldecott are just a handful of masters who have created illustrations that successfully enhance the text, accurately convey information, and strikingly catapult the tales to new forms of artistry.

In many cases, the book itself works magic and no interpretation is needed. Whenever the storyteller does reveal the tale, it is the story that is the focus. It still depends on the word to work all the magic. A good story needs no intermediary. It will handle the difficult concepts well. *The Hare and the Tortoise*, in any version, has good characterization. A great deal is learned about the two animals, their habits, and their philosophies about winning and life. The illustrations are important. They create a scene and help locate a particular setting. However, the focus is still the story. The same can be said for Tomie dePaola's (1988) *The Legend of the Indian Paintbrush*. The legend is an intricate saga to comprehend, but it is successful, even with a young crew, because it is presented so well.

Didacticism

For the purpose of this article, didacticism refers to the intent to convey instruction and information as well as to please and entertain the reader. Traditional literature, folklore, and contemporary tales have implicit lessons that teach us in a way that nothing else can. Because of the use of didacticism in literature, we learn lessons for the rest of our lives. Who, when reading or hearing *The Baker's Dozen* by Heather Forest (1988), cannot help but learn the value of doing a good job? Repeated readings of the same tales also present us with the opportunity to extract something different from the story each time. Marcia Brown's (1947) *Stone Soup* primarily is a story of how three hungry soldiers trick the townspeople out of their food in storage. However, with subsequent readings, we discover the intelligence and wisdom of these three infantrymen when we realize that they have taught us the value and benefit of sharing with one

another. Later readings demonstrate the concept of resourcefulness and creativity. How often do we, as teachers, parents, and caregivers, revert back to this simple lesson that so many of us learned from repeated hearings of the tale on the early morning television show from the nineteen fifties and sixties, "Captain Kangaroo"?

The literature becomes a teaching tool again when the emphasis is taken off the word and refocused on society. This cultural literacy that we painlessly learn transcends all ages. In Gerald McDermott's (1975) version of the Japanese legend, *The Stone Cutter*, Tasaku unwisely longs for wealth, the power of the sun, the clouds, and the mountain. His foolish longing for power becomes a tale of wishes and dreams that can be understood on many levels. The child is magnificently introduced to the artistry of the Japanese people, in addition to the Eastern lesson of being content in life. The design motifs of traditional Japanese printmaking are incorporated into the resplendent full-color collages from a scroll-like series of dramatic storytelling images. What illustrator McDermott chooses to transmit through Japanese imagery, Patricia Newton (1990) conveys through an Eastern Indian society in her version of *The Stone Cutter*. These strong images of a people can also be seen in Sally Scott's (1987) adaption of the Russian tale, *The Three Wonderful Beggars*. After predicting that hard-hearted Mark the Rich will lose his fortune to the young Vassilil, three beggars save Vassilil from Mark's repeated attempts to kill him. Those who share this title will experience the harsh and crude life of so many Russian peasants, the rich textures in design indicative of Russian art, and the classic Ukrainian lesson of just, though unusual, punishment.

Given the didactic nature of stories, it is necessary to caution against perpetuating stereotypes. If we are exposed to a constant barrage of "wicked stepmother," then it is easy to see how our vision of a real stepmother in society is shaped. Not all stepmothers are wicked, not all ugly people are bad, black is not necessarily representative of evil, and white is not always good. Two of the best examples of this point appear in the same version of *Snow White* (Heins, 1974), illustrated by Trina Schart Hyman. The stepmother, who becomes such a wicked character in the retelling, is not at all ugly. She is shown as a striking figure who was very beautiful. The reader will also note throughout the book that Snow White herself is illuminated each time she appears on a page. The rest of the details fade into darkness and nondescriptive focus. Even in the scenes with the other positive members of the cast—the dwarfs, the prince, and his servants—the lightness, indicating the purest person, remains on Snow White.

CONCLUSION

In his acceptance speech for the Academy of Arts and Sciences' Lifetime Achievement Award a few years ago, Steven Spielberg stated: "Only a generation of readers will spawn a generation of writers." Reading is the last private act known to man. The unique experience of reading words and absorbing their meaning is a reward in itself. When text, art, and emotion meet, there is true harmony. However, it is only when literature is shared that it truly comes alive.

In this article, the authors have presented the criteria for selecting these traditional and contemporary pieces of literature for deaf children. Throughout, they have attempted to provide examples to support the ten points of focus. Like our ancestors, we all need the magic of folktales. In summarizing the effect of story on all of our lives, Jane Yolen (1981) says it best:

[We all need the magic of folktales,] the magic of wonder, the magic of language, or the magic of challenging a waiting mind. It is up to the artist, the writer, the storyteller to reach out and touch that awesome magic . . . then pass it on. (p. 91)

APPENDIX A

TRADITIONAL TALES TO USE WITH DEAF CHILDREN

- Aardema, Verna. (1975). *Why mosquitoes buzz in people's ears: A West African tale*. New York: Dial.
- Aardema, Verna. (1981). *Bringing the rain to Kapiti Plain: A Nandi tale*. New York: Dial.
- Aardema, Verna. (1991). *Borreguita and the coyote: A tale from Ayutla, Mexico*. New York: Knopf.
- Alexander, Ellen. (1989). *Llama and the Great Flood: A folktale from Peru*. New York: Crowell.
- Brett, Jan. (1989). *Beauty and the beast*. New York: Clarion Books.
- Brett, Jan. (1989). *The mitten: A Ukrainian folktale*. New York: Putnam.
- Brown, Marcia. (1975). *Stone soup: An old tale*. New York: Scribner's Sons.
- Brown, Marcia. (1982). *Shadow*. New York: Scribner's Sons.
- Carrick, Carol. (1989). *Aladdin and the wonderful lamp*. New York: Scholastic.
- Cauley, Lorinda Bryan. (1984). *The town mouse and the country mouse*. New York: Putnam.
- Climo, Shirley. (1988). *King of the birds*. New York: Crowell.
- Climo, Shirley. (1989). *The Egyptian Cinderella*. New York: Crowell.
- Cohen, Caron Lee. (1988). *The mud pony: A traditional Skidi Pawnee tale*. New York: Scholastic.
- De la Mare, Walter. (1983). *Molly Whuppie*. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux.
- dePaola, Tomie. (1975). *Strega Nona: An old tale*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- dePaola, Tomie. (1988). *The legend of the Indian paintbrush*. New York: Putnam.
- Forest, Heather. (1988). *The baker's dozen: A colonial American tale*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Forest, Heather. (1990). *The woman who flummoxed the fairies: An old tale from Scotland*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Goble, Paul. (1978). *The girl who loved wild horses*. New York: Bradbury.
- Goble, Paul. (1984). *Buffalo woman*. New York: Bradbury.
- Grifalconi, Ann. (1986). *The village of round and square houses*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown.
- Hague, Kathleen, & Hague, Michael. (1981). *The man who kept house*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Haley, Gail. (1970). *A story, a story: An African tale*. New York: Atheneum.
- Heins, Paul. (1974). *Snow White*. Boston, MA: Little, Brown.
- Hooks, William H. (1990). *The ballad of Belle Dorcas*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Isadora, Rachel. (1989). *The princess and the frog*. New York: Greenwillow.
- Ishi, Momoko. (1987). *The tongue-cut sparrow*. New York: Lodestar Books (Dutton).
- Jacobs, Joseph. (1989). *Tattercoats*. New York: Putnam.
- Kellogg, Steven. (1984). *Paul Bunyan: A tall tale*. New York: William Morrow.
- Kellogg, Steven. (1991). *Jack and the beanstalk*. New York: Morrow Junior Books.
- Kimmel, Eric A. (1988). *Anansi and the moss-covered rock*. New York: Holiday House.

- Kimmel, Eric A. (1991). *The greatest of all: A Japanese folktale*. New York: Holiday House.
- Lacapa, Michael. (1990). *The flute player: An Apache folktale*. Flagstaff, AZ: Northland.
- Lattimore, Deborah Nourse. (1989). *Why there is no arguing in heaven: A Mayan myth*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Louie, Ai-Ling. (1982). *Yeh-shen: A Cinderella story from China*. New York: Philomel.
- Manson, Christopher. (1989). *A gift for the king: A Persian tale*. New York: Henry Holt.
- Marshak, Samuel. (1983). *The month-brothers: A Slavic tale*. New York: William Morrow.
- Mayer, Marianna. (1978). *Beauty and the beast*. New York: Four Winds Press.
- McDermott, Gerald. (1972). *Anansi the spider*. New York: Henry Holt.
- Mosel, Arlene. (1968). *Tikki-tikki-tembo*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Mosel, Arlene. (1972). *The funny little woman*. New York: Dutton.
- Pearson, Susan. (1989). *Jack and the beanstalk*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Perrault, C. (1990). *Puss in boots* (illustrated by F. Marcellino). New York: Farrar Straus Giroux.
- San Souci, Robert. (1987). *The enchanted tapestry*. New York: Dial.
- San Souci, Robert. (1989). *The talking eggs: A folktale*. New York: Dial.
- Scott, Sally. (1987). *The three wonderful beggars*. New York: Greenwillow Books.
- Sloat, Teri. (1990). *The eye of the needle*. New York: Dutton Children's Books.
- Snyder, Dianne. (1988). *The boy of the three year nap*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
- Step toe, John. (1987). *Mufaro's beautiful daughter: An African tale*. New York: Lothrop, Lee and Shepard.
- Tom Tit Tot*. (1974). Chicago, IL: Great Books Foundation.
- Wisniewski, David. (1991). *Rain player*. New York: Clarion.
- Yolen, Jane. (1988). *The emperor and the kite*. New York: Philomel.
- Young, Ed. (1989). *Lon Po Po: A Red-Riding Hood story from China*. New York: Philomel.
- Zelinsky, Paul O. (1986). *Rumpelstiltskin*. New York: Dutton.
- Zemach, Margot. (1976). *It could always be worse: A Yiddish folktale*. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux.

APPENDIX B

CONTEMPORARY FICTION TO USE WITH DEAF CHILDREN

- Ahlberg, Janet, and Ahlberg, Allen. (1986). *The jolly postman, or other people's letters*. New York: Little, Brown.
- Burnford, Sheila E. (1961). *The incredible journey*. New York: Little, Brown.
- Freeman, Don. (1968). *Corduroy*. New York: Viking.
- French, Fiona. (1991). *Anancy and Mr. Drybone*. New York: Little, Brown.
- Hamilton, Virginia. (1988). *In the beginning: Creation stories from around the world*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Hoffman, Mary. (1991). *Amazing grace*. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers.
- Isadora, Rachel. (1989). *The princess and the frog*. New York: Greenwillow.
- Kasza, Keiko. (1987). *The wolf's chicken stew*. New York: Putnam.
- Krauss, Ruth. (1945). *The carrot seed*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Lee, Jeanne M. (1991). *Silent lotus*. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux.
- Levitin, Sonia. (1991). *The man who kept his heart in a bucket*. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers.
- Lord, John Vernon. (1972). *The giant jam sandwich*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
- Martin, Bill, Jr., & Archambault, John. (1987). *Knots on a counting rope*. New York: Henry Holt.
- Mayer, Marianna. (1982). *The unicorn and the lake*. New York: Dial.
- Morgan, Pierre. (1990). *The turnip: An old Russian folktale*. New York: Philomel.
- Newton, Pam. (1990). *The stone cutter: An Indian folktale*. New York: Whitebird (Putnam).
- Paterson, Katherine. (1990). *The tale of the mandarin ducks*. New York: Lodestar (Dutton).
- Preussler, Otfried. (1989). *The tale of the unicorn*. New York: Dial.
- Sanderson, Ruth. (1991). *The enchanted wood: An original fairy tale*. New York: Little, Brown.
- Scieszka, Jon. (1989). *The true story of the three little pigs*. New York: Viking Kestrel.
- Scieszka, Jon. (1991). *The frog prince continued*. New York: Viking.
- Seeger, Pete. (1986). *Abiyoyo: Based on a South African lullaby and folk story*. New York: Macmillan.
- Shute, Linda. (1988). *Clever Tom and the Leprechaun: An old Irish story*. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepherd Books.
- Singer, Marilyn. (1991). *The golden heart of winter*. New York: Morrow Junior Books.
- Slobodkina, Esphyr. (1947). *Caps for sale: A tale of a peddler, some monkeys, and their monkey business*. New York: Young Scott Books.
- Van Allsburg, Chris. (1986). *The stranger*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.
- Wood, Audrey. (1987). *Heckedy Peg*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Yolen, Jane. (1989). *Dove Isabeau*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Yolen, Jane. (1988). *The emperor and the kite*. New York: Philomel.

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- Young, E. (1989). *Lon Po Po: A Red-Riding Hood story from China*. New York: Philomel.