

Varieties of Censorship: Respecting Others' Cultures

Lisa Hertsenberg

“We realize the importance of our words when we are silenced.” --- Malala Yousafzai

Introduction/Rationale

I feel there is a need in today's modern day classroom to show tolerance and understanding towards other cultures, religions, and backgrounds. Children don't always understand why someone dresses different, talks different, or acts differently than themselves. What is acceptable in one household may not be acceptable in another household. Tolerance towards others needs to be taught in our community. In 2015, we are seeing so much diversity around us here in America as more immigrants enter our country. Educating the youth about these differences and similarities will create a better understanding of the diversity that exists around us. It is scary to see the violence that we have witnessed on the news lately about the intolerance of others. How can we create an America of tolerance and understanding towards others?

I am interested in creating a unit that combines the use of our social studies standards on understanding our freedoms as American people with comparison/contrast informational writing. At the second grade level the main focus of the curriculum is teaching respect, how to show respect for others, how to respectfully express an opinion, and how to respectfully listen to other students' opinions.

I teach at Kathleen H. Wilbur Elementary, a K-5 school in the Colonial School District. We are a Title 1 school, so all of our students receive free breakfast and lunch every day. Our school has about 1,200 students making us one of the largest elementary schools in Delaware. I teach 23 second grade students at Wilbur. I have 12 girls and 11 boys. In my classroom there is a combination of regular education students, along with students diagnosed with ADHD, and Social/Emotional issues. There is a combination of low-socio economic students, as well as some students who come from affluent areas in the New Castle and Bear areas.

In addition, my children are very diverse in their cultural backgrounds. I have children from Puerto Rico, Mexico, Thailand, China, Nigeria, Jamaica, and Serbia. I also have a Muslim child. Each of these children have very different backgrounds, religions, and cultures. It is interesting to see how accepting and kind my students are towards each

other when we all come together every day for the common goal of creating a community of learners.

I am going to use literature to teach my students what it is like to grow up in other parts of the world. I'm going to have the children explore what it is like to live in different cultures around the world. I thought it would be interesting to use some of the cultures that are present in my classroom so the children will feel connected to the characters. I want the children to feel empathy when they are thinking about the characters rights and cultural backgrounds. The students will present their view and write a comparison/ contrast paper showing the differences in 2 or 3 different cultures that they explored. As a class we will also compare these different cultures with Malala.

Enduring Understandings

Students will understand:

The principles and ideals underlying American democracy are designed to promote the freedom of the American people.

The understanding called for requires knowing “why” respect for others is a foundation of civil society. The answer involves the need for order, but also the need for tolerance and respect for laws if freedom and democracy are to prevail.

Essential Questions

1. Why is respect for others, their opinions, and property so important in our society?
2. How do I show respect?
3. How is respect for others' opinions demonstrated in a civil society?
4. How can I express my opinion in a respectful manner?

Background Information

The first 10 amendments to the Constitution make up the Bill of Rights. Written by James Madison in response to calls from several states for greater constitutional protection for individual liberties, the Bill of Rights lists specific prohibitions on governmental power.

Why the Bill of Rights? The Founders believed that for the survival of a representative democracy it is necessary to have an open, free exchange of ideas. As Benjamin Franklin proclaimed, “Whoever would overthrow the liberty of a nation must begin by subduing the freeness of speech.” The Founders established the freedoms of

speech and the press in the First Amendment to protect this principle. In recalling their wisdom, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black wrote, “The Framers knew that free speech is the friend of change and revolution. But they also knew that it is always the deadliest enemy of tyranny.”ⁱ

The First Amendment states that “Congress Shall Make No Law Respecting an Establishment of Religion, or Prohibiting the Free Exercise Thereof; or Abridging the Freedom of Speech, or of the Press; or the Right of the People Peaceably to Assemble, and to Petition the Government for a Redress of Grievances.” Helping my students understand the significance of this amendment, and how it affects them as citizens of the United States is going to be a good lesson within itself. I will talk to them about their individual freedoms, but also that they can’t interfere with other citizen’s freedoms.

Internationally the freedom of speech is not just a Constitutional right, it is a universal value according to Universal Declaration of Human Rights. “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.” – Article 19, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UN 1948.ⁱⁱ This is important to my unit in helping the students understand that different countries have different ways of expressing their opinions. The students are probably not aware of the fact that expression of opinion or beliefs in various countries could possibly be harmful to their wellbeing.

Another important concept to be considered when expressing our opinions is how we will respectfully express ourselves so that others will listen to us as a valued resource. The answer to that is “Civility.” According to the Honorable William H. Rehnquist, the word civility suggests courtesy or politeness. He stated that it was a surprise when he found the Latin word *civilitas*, means “the art of government.” He focused his attention on the virtue of civility in connection with the exercise of traditionally valued freedom of speech and expression.ⁱⁱⁱ

The term “civility” includes the belief that the speaker should not be physically disturbed in the course of speaking. This is the understanding by attendees at a large public meeting; it is the extent of this commitment which the idea of civility requires. Certainly no one is obligated to agree with the speaker at such a meeting, nor is he obligated to attend at all.^{iv}

But in a smaller group, whether in the classroom or elsewhere, the idea of civility suggests something different, a sort of private orderliness. To preserve the meaningful

freedom of expression it is essential that there is public order which the Constitution imposes on the government, and the government by law imposes on those who would physically disrupt public meetings. The government shall not take away the freedom of speech, but clearly this alone is not enough even for public orderliness. The government could follow the constitutional restrictions, and we could still have a form of unregulated anarchy where neither freedom of speech nor any other meaningful activities were possible.

The government itself will not punish those who speak freely, but it will maintain order to the end so that speakers who wish to speak to audiences, or people who wish to listen, are not wrongfully disturbed in pursuing these goals. These are the requirements of public orderliness.^v

Civility, however, requires more than maintaining public orderliness. Additionally, it includes a personal belief in private orderliness. It suggests some commitment to an atmosphere of discussion that is free of visible and bristling hostility in small groups where there can be the give and take necessary to conduct an informed discussion.

Freedom of Speech Does Have Its Limits

Alexander Meiklejohn made this point, “When self-governing men demand freedom of speech they are not saying that every individual has an unalienable right to speak whenever, wherever, however he chooses. They do not declare that any man may talk as he pleases, when he pleases, about what he pleases, about whom he pleases, to whom he pleases.”^{vi}

This statement is very important. We have the freedom to express our views at appropriate times and places. We do not have the freedom to express our opinions any time that suits us. There are also limits in our freedom to express our views to whoever we want to.

The most notable boundary in the freedom of expression is when speech or writing will create an incitement of violence. Judge Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.’s memorable statement that the freedom of speech should not include the freedom to falsely shout “Fire!” in a crowded theatre. The reason for this is that someone yelling “Fire!” in a crowded theatre might cause a stampede of theatre goers causing injury or death to others.^{vii}

Holmes also stated that, “The question in every case is whether the words used are used in such circumstances and are of such a nature as create a clear and present danger

that they will bring about the substantive evils that Congress has a right to prevent. It is a question of proximity and degree. When a nation is at war many things that might be said in time of peace are such a hindrance to its effort that their utterance will not be endured so long as men fight, and that no court could regard them as protected by any constitutional right."^{viii} This is significant because citizens cannot create a disturbance in a public area, such as a school, theatre, or any other public arena.

Free Speech and Public Schools

On some public school grounds students and teachers are free to speak their minds. They can wear jewelry or buttons that make a statement, dye their hair interesting colors, and wear T-shirts with messages. However, there are limits within the school setting, even with First Amendment protection guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution. It is complicated to figure out where the line is drawn.^{ix}

The Free Speech Clause in the First Amendment requires school districts and the courts to bump heads when these acts of free speech seem to step over the line. The reason for this is that the public school and the courts are responsible for:

1. The need for a safe, orderly school environment conducive to learning.
2. The guaranteed American entitlement to speak or engage in expressive activity.

Both the courts and the public school system have their own interests in keeping the peace while still allowing the students to express themselves. Many people believe that it is our free speech that separates us from other countries that are oppressed. The freedom to speak, and be heard are the core of our American society. Public schools represent our society in a smaller scale.

According to our Constitution the freedom of speech is not limited to just our spoken words. Symbols and non-verbal expression such as art, dance, websites, and clothing can be used to express opinions. Where do we as a society step in and say, "That is just too much!"?

The public school system has a responsibility to teach the children about democracy and what it is all about. Our public schools are an example of how a democracy works. As tax-payers we vote on whether or not we should raise our taxes to help support the local schools. We would be hypocritical as public school employees to teach about the First Amendment and then not follow it. Yet, free speech cannot overrule the main mission. As one federal court put it, "Learning is more important in the classroom than free speech."^x

Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District is the single most influential U.S. Supreme Court case on school free speech. The 1969 case involved Iowa students and their right to wear a black armband in school to symbolically protest against the Vietnam War. The Court ruled in the *Tinker* case that public school students enjoyed First Amendment rights. “It can hardly be argued that either students or teachers shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate.”^{xi}

The school officials were asked how the wearing of armbands created a “substantial disruption” to school activities, or how did it invade the rights of others. The court ruled that the wearing of these armbands was a form of symbolic speech “akin to pure speech” and that the act was a “non-disruptive, passive expression of a political viewpoint.” The court ruled that this expression cannot be squelched due to “a mere desire to avoid [the] discomfort and unpleasantness that always accompanies an unpopular viewpoint.”^{xii}

In *Bethel School District No. 403 v. Fraser* (1986), the Supreme Court agreed with the school district’s right to punish a student who gave a lewd, vulgar political speech at a school assembly. The court reasoned that “it is a highly appropriate function of public school education to prohibit the use of vulgar and offensive terms in public discourse.”^{xiii}

The court expressed its concern about the academic environment by stating, “The freedom to advocate unpopular and controversial views in schools and classrooms must be balanced against society’s countervailing interest in teaching students the boundaries of socially appropriate behavior.”^{xiv}

For certain speeches to be permitted on school grounds the courts need to allow students to express themselves in a respectful manner under the Constitution, and determine whether schools can place limits. One technique for figuring that out is the “forum analysis,” which enables school officials to control the time, place, and manner of speech. The three types of forums are:

- Open Forum: A public place, like a park, that is traditionally used as a place of free public discourse.
- Limited forum: Generally a public area, like the common area in a school. It is not open to anyone, but has been made available in limited ways and at limited times for certain speech.
- Closed forum: A private space, not used for an exchange of ideas. In fact, the place’s purpose would be lost if free speech were allowed, such as class time, school plays, or curricular-related activities.^{xv}

In the Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier case of 1988 the school district removed articles from student newspapers that they felt were not curriculum related. At Hazelwood East High School the students enrolled in the Journalism II class were responsible for writing and editing the school's paper The Spectrum. The paper contained two articles in the final edition of publication that contained stories on divorce and teenage pregnancy. The divorce article was a feature article in which the girl blamed her father's actions for the divorce. The teenage pregnancy article featured stories about pregnant students at Hazelwood East.^{xvi}

The girls' names were changed in the article to ensure their privacy. The school principal concluded that the articles contained inappropriate subject matter. The principal felt that the father in the divorce article should be informed about the article and given an opportunity to comment in order to ensure journalistic fairness. He also stated that it may not be sufficient enough to simply change the names of girls in the teenage pregnancy article. He was very concerned about the topic not being suitable for the younger students at the school. Therefore, he did not allow the articles to be published in the school paper.^{xvii}

The pages that contained these articles were completely eliminated from the school newspaper since there was no time to edit them before it went to print at the end of the school year. The student journalists alleged that their First Amendment rights to the freedom of speech had been violated, so they brought suit to the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri.

The U.S. District Court concluded that their freedoms of speech rights were not violated. The students appealed to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit, which reversed the ruling, stating that the students' rights had been violated. The school appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, which granted certiorari. Certiorari means the Court agreed to review the case again. The Supreme Court reversed the Eighth Circuit's decision by a 5 to 3 vote. The decision of the school principal to prohibit the publishing of certain articles deemed to be inappropriate does not violate the student journalists' First Amendment right of freedom of speech.^{xviii} The court's reasoning behind this is that the administration does have a right to edit material that is published under the school's supervision.

In the above freedom of speech court cases that I explored here the students wanted to exercise their rights as American citizens according to the rights and privileges that they understood existed in the United States of America. I also want to try to help foster thinking, questioning, and problem solving students in my classroom. The idea of civility in the classroom is an important concept for the children to understand in relation to this unit. Not only are we learning how to respect each other's differences, we are also respecting each other when presenting our material to each other. The Supreme Court

has worked hard at balancing the fine line of free speech rights, and maintained a civil environment that is conducive to learning. Not only are we researching various cultures and how different our cultures are, we are also learning how to respectfully listen to each other when the presentations begin. I will have the children use a civility rubric to self-assess themselves when they are listening to the presentations (see <http://www.tusculum.edu/academics/commons/rubrics/CivilityRubric.pdf>).

All About Malala Yousafzai - How Can a Child Help Teach Tolerance?

I started this paper off with a quote by Malala Yousafzai, and that is what I wanted to further explore with my students. I've been very inspired by this young lady, and how she had the courage to stand up for what she believes in. She is the prime example of what free speech is all about. She has sacrificed her life to speak about what she believes in.

Wouldn't it be wonderful to teach my students about this young lady through literature, then discuss how she used her words to try and make a difference not only in her life, but in the lives of all young women? Our children in the United States don't realize how fortunate they are to be able to attend a free public school every day without fearing for their safety.

Who is Malala Yousafzai? She is the Pakistani girl who was shot for going to school. Malala was born on July 12, 1997 in the Swat District of Pakistan's northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, into a Sunni Muslim family of Pashtun ethnicity. Malala is fluent in Pashto, English, and Urdu. Her father, Ziauddin Yousafzai, who is a poet, school owner, and an educational activist himself, educated her. He runs a chain of private schools known as the Khushal Public School.

In early September 2008, Yousafzai started speaking about education rights. "How dare the Taliban take away my basic right to education?" she asked her audience in a speech covered by newspapers and television channels throughout the region.

At the time, Taliban militants led by Maulana Fazlullah were taking over the Swat Valley, banning television, music, girls' education, and women from going shopping. Bodies of beheaded policemen were being hung in town squares.

In Mingora, the Taliban had an official order that no girls could attend school after January 15, 2009. The group had already blown up more than a hundred girls' schools.

Yousafzai continued to speak out about her right, and the right of all women, to an education. Her activism resulted in a nomination for the International Children's Peace Prize in 2011. That same year, she was awarded Pakistan's National Youth Peace Prize.

When Malala was 14 her family learned that the Taliban had issued a death threat against her. Her father, an anti-Taliban activist, initially felt that the fundamentalist group would not actually harm a child.

On October 9, 2012, on her way home from school, a man boarded the bus Malala was riding in and demanded to know which girl was Malala. Her location was given away when her friends looked toward Malala. The gunman fired at her, hitting Malala in the left side of her head; the bullet then traveled down her neck. Two other girls were also injured in the attack.

Malala was in critical condition from the shooting, so she was flown to a military hospital in Peshawar. A portion of her skull was removed to treat her swelling brain. To receive further care, she was transferred to Birmingham, England.

Yousafzai was taken out of a medically induced coma when she was in the United Kingdom. She suffered no major brain damage even though she would require multiple surgeries, including repair of a facial nerve to fix the paralyzed left side of her face.

Malala received an outpouring of support which continued during her recovery. In 2013, on her 16th birthday, she gave a speech at the United Nations. She has also written an autobiography, I Am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban, which was released in October 2013. Unfortunately, Yousafzai is still considered a target by the Taliban.

In October 2014, Yousafzai received the Nobel Peace Prize, along with Indian children's rights activist Kailash Satyarthi. At age 17, she became the youngest person to receive the Nobel Peace Prize.^{xix}

Activities Planned for this Unit

Activity One:

Activating Strategy:

The teacher will read aloud the book We Are Alike. We Are Different by Cheltenham Elementary Kindergartners and Laura Dwight. We will talk about how we are all alike

and different in many ways. I will create a t-chart on the Smartboard with We Are Alike on one side, and We Are Different on the other side.

Lesson:

I will show the children various books I have collected about children from different countries. Some of the countries that we will be exploring are Pakistan, China, Thailand, Vietnam, Puerto Rico, Mexico, Nigeria, and Serbia. (See Appendix B for a list of books I collected for this activity.)

The children will then choose their countries, and choose a partner. The partners will read their books, and write down facts they learned about their country. (See Appendix C.)

Activity Two:

Activating Strategy:

The teacher will read aloud the book Malala Yousafzai Warrior with Words by Karen Leggett Abouraya. Then we will write down the facts we learned about the Pakistan girl who was shot for wanting to go to school. I feel this book needs to be read aloud and discussed as a group due to the sensitivity of the issue. We will discuss how education is valued around the world differently. We will also discuss how Malala stood up for her rights to attend school even though she knew it was dangerous. We will look at why this was important to her.

Lesson:

Then I will have the children research the educational system in their selected country. They will look for information on specific websites I have chosen to be appropriate for them. This may also be a very sensitive issue that needs to be well researched by the teacher before she lets the children loose to look up information independently. (See Appendix D)

Activity Three:

Activating Strategy:

The teacher will read aloud one of the other country books (ex: Richshaw Girl by Mitali Perkins) and show the children how to fill out the compare/contrast page. (See Appendix E)

Lesson:

The students will pick another country that they want to compare/contrast filling out the graphic organizer. Then the students will write a comparison/contrast writing piece using

their graphic organizer. We will focus on transition words, and how to effectively write a strong paper.

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2015. <http://www.biography.com/people/malala-yousafzai-21362253>. This website contains a summary of Malala's life. She was the Pakistan girl that was shot by the Taliban for going to school.

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"Tinker v. Des Moines - Landmark Supreme Court Ruling on Behalf of Student Expression." American Civil Liberties Union. Accessed January 26, 2016. <https://www.aclu.org/tinker-v-des-moines-landmark-supreme-court-ruling-behalf-student-expression>. This article summary is about students that wanted to wear armbands to school showing their resistance to the war.

"The Universal Declaration of Human Rights | United Nations." UN News Center. Accessed January 26, 2016. <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>. This website has the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Warburton, Nigel. *Free Speech: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009. This book addresses all the court cases and issues about censorship and freedom of speech in a short summary book.

Appendix A

Common Core Standards for Second Grade

Speaking and Listening:

Comprehension and Collaboration: The students will be working in small groups and partners to examine two cultures.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.2.1

Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about *grade 2 topics and texts* with peers and adults in small and larger groups.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.2.1.a

Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions (e.g., gaining the floor in respectful ways, listening to others with care, speaking one at a time about the topics and texts under discussion).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.2.1.b

Build on others' talk in conversations by linking their comments to the remarks of others.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.2.1.c

Ask for clarification and further explanation as needed about the topics and texts under discussion.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.2.2

Recount or describe key ideas or details from a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.2.3

Ask and answer questions about what a speaker says in order to clarify comprehension, gather additional information, or deepen understanding of a topic or issue.

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas: Students will be creating a compare/contrast Google slides presentation to share with their classmates.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.2.4

Tell a story or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking audibly in coherent sentences.

Civics Standard Two K-3a: Students will understand that respect for others, their opinions, and their property is a foundation of civil society in the United States.

Civics Standard Three K-3a: Students will understand that American citizens have distinct responsibilities (such as voting), rights (such as free speech and freedom of religion), and privileges (such as driving).

Civics Standard Four K-3a: Students will acquire the skills necessary for participating in a group, including defining an objective, dividing responsibilities, and working cooperatively.

Geography Standard Four K-3a: Students will be able to use the concepts of place and region to explain simple patterns of connections between and among places across the country and the world.

Appendix B

List of recommended books:

1. Rickshaw Girl by Mitali Perkins
2. A Long Walk to Water: Based on a True Story by Linda Sue Park
3. My Name is Maria Isabel by Alma Flor Ada
4. Four Feet, Two Sandals by Karen Lynn
5. I Live in Tokyo by Mari Takabayashi
6. Living in Brazil by Chloe Perkins
7. If You Were Me and Lived in China: A Child's Introduction to Culture Around the World by Carole P. Roman
8. Whoever You Are by Mem Fox (Reading Rainbow Series)
9. Water Buffalo Days: Growing Up in Vietnam by Huynh Quang Nhuong
10. Rashad's Ramadan and Eid Al-Fitr by Lisa Bullard
11. Golden Domes and Silver Lanterns: A Muslim Book of Colors by Hena Khan
12. The Name Jar by Yangsook Choi

Appendix C

Name: _____

Country: _____

| | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| What continent is your country on? North America, South America, Africa, Europe, Asia, Australia, or Antarctica. | * |
| What language is spoken in your country? | * |
| Describe the climate of your country. What kinds of clothes are worn by the people in your country? | * * |
| Describe the geography of your country. Name the oceans, rivers, mountains, and land type that make up your country. | * * * |
| What kinds of foods are eaten in your country? Do they eat anything different from you? | * * |
| Any other interesting facts you learned: | * * * |

Appendix D

Name: _____

Country: _____

You are looking up how the educational system is different in your country.

Look under these websites:

1. KidRex.org
2. Google Junior
3. Kids.yahoo.com
4. Funbrain.com
5. Kids.nationalgeographic.com
6. BrainPop.com
7. Factmonster.com

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| What age do the children start going to school? | * |
| Do the children go to school? | * |
| When does the school year start? | * |
| When does the school year end? | * |
| Do the children wear a uniform? | * |
| What does it look like? | * |
| Do the children ride a bus or walk to school? | * |
| Other interesting facts that you learned about the educational system in your country. | * * * |

Appendix E

Name: _____

| My Country: _____ | Things they have in common: | Another Country: _____ |
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Endnotes

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viii. Ibid.

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Curriculum Unit
Title

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KEY LEARNING, ENDURING UNDERSTANDING, ETC.

Students will be examining the cultures of the different students in our classroom. The students will be reading various books from these countries and take a closer look at how they compare to the American school system, and the ways of life in America.

ESSENTIAL QUESTION(S) for the UNIT

1. Why is respect for others, their opinions, and property so important in our society?
2. How do I show respect?
3. How is respect for others' opinions demonstrated in a civil society?
4. How can I express my opinion in a respectful manner?

CONCEPT A

Respect others, their opinions, and their property.

CONCEPT B

Respecting other cultures in our civil society.

CONCEPT C

Expressing opinions in a respectful manner.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS A

Why is respect for others, their opinions, and property so important in our society?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS B

How do I show respect for others' opinions and cultures in our civil society?

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS C

How can I express my opinion in a respectful manner?

VOCABULARY A

Respect, Opinion, Society

VOCABULARY B

Cultures, Civil, Civility, Compare/Contrast

VOCABULARY C

Expression, Respectful manner

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION/MATERIAL/TEXT/FILM/RESOURCES

List of recommended books:

1. Rickshaw Girl by Mitali Perkins
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4. Four Feet, Two Sandals by Karen Lynn
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7. If You Were Me and Lived in China: A Child's Introduction to Culture Around the World by Carole P. Roman
8. Whoever You Are by Mem Fox (Reading Rainbow Series)
9. Water Buffalo Days: Growing Up in Vietnam by Huynh Quang Nhuong
10. Rashad's Ramadan and Eid Al-Fitr by Lisa Bullard
11. Golden Domes and Silver Lanterns: A Muslim Book of Colors by Hena Khan
12. The Name Jar by Yangsook Choi