

Multicultural analysis of bud, not buddy

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I feel that the book, *Bud not Buddy* is successful overall when evaluating or analyzing it against different criteria for successful multicultural books and materials. *Bud, not Buddy* is set in the 1930's at the height of the Great Depression and with this book, the author Christopher Paul Curtis, skillfully weaves in Bud's experiences with poverty, racism, and the experience of being an African-American foster child during the Great Depression.

The author, Christopher Paul Curtis, writes from the perspective of a cultural insider's mind-set and point of view when writing this book and giving the reader an accurate, yet interesting portrayal of what can happen to any child in similar circumstances during the Depression. In this novel, the storyline focuses on a ten-year-old African-American boy named "Bud." Although there are no illustrations in this book, the text of the book does occasionally give the reader glimpses into the fact that Bud is an African-American boy. However, the reader for the most part deduces the culture of Bud through the use of indirect things in the story.

Some of those indirect things include the focus on the jazz band musicians conversations, the "stranger" who picks Bud up and lectures him for being alone and Black in that area at night, Bud passing by a group of people before arriving at the cardboard jungle and referring to them as "the white people with the coughing baby" (Curtis, 1999). There were no over-generalizations or simplifications of the African-American culture used in this book. The author did not use any language I felt was condescending to the culture represented.

If I had not seen the cover of the book, there were only a few sentences and subtle indications sprinkled throughout the book that indicates the young

Bud was an African-American child. I feel part of the reason the book and the characters were successful without being stereotypical is, as the author indicates in the Afterword of the book, some of the characters were loosely based on real individuals in the author's life. Real individuals are not stereotypes so I think the reader can see this. The character Bud, was presented multi-dimensionally, so much so that his personality overshadowed his cultural group.

I think this in itself is one measure of a successful multi-cultural children's fiction book with characters of any cultural background. There were no images presented by the author that could lead to stereotyping the character and nothing to indicate the writer was attempting to meet the expectations of an audience who had pre-conceived notions of this culture. The cultural details that were within the story were naturally integrated. For example, when referring to the jazz band, the author doesn't throw it in the reader's face what the members look like.

His words convey enough that one understands the culture of each member without any stereotypical features being used to identify them. In asking myself does the book present cultural details authentically, I would say yes. I could see authentic culture being represented in most of the language in the story, in discussion of the instruments and the players in the jazz band, in the details of the individuals who ended up being Bud's caretakers, and even in the food in The Sweat Pea Restaurant included cultural details that added a 3-dimensional-like feel to the novel.

I did not see any invalid information for the culture addressed in the book or invalid information in general. I have to take in consideration the time period

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this book is supposedly taking place in as far as determining whether the language is used authentically. I have to admit, possibly because I am in the 21st century, I oftentimes got the picture of a rural white farm boy in that Bud constantly and consistently uses the words “ shucks” and “ doggone” and similar vocabulary to this.

I realize some of the language is limited since Bud, not Buddy is a children’s book but I wasn’t always impressed with some of the vocabulary that was used and was not used. In my opinion, this would probably be one of the weaker areas in my analysis of the book. Good multicultural books should allow the reader(s) to experience the culture that the book is addressing. I did feel that while reading the book and in the use of some of the cultural details, I was experiencing the culture.

I also felt the cultural elements oftentimes gave the book more color in that it lifted some of the text off the page in a sense. Along with this, just my personal feelings of course, I sometimes felt the author in avoiding being stereotypical in any sense, tiptoed around some areas that could have enriched the story. However, I do respect how fine the line can be between doing a multicultural story justice and avoiding some words and areas while presenting a quality multicultural story. When I think about it, even in the resolution of the problem in this story, it is a positive representation of the culture.

The family and friends of the child take the child in, provide Bud a safe environment and the affection he wasn’t receiving before re-uniting with the family and friends within his own culture. That is a quality I didn’t even see initially until I put further thought into this multicultural analysis. This

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only strengthens the success of Bud, not Buddy's portrayal of multicultural issues. I could strongly state that the book, Bud, not Buddy would enhance any elementary classroom library, learning resource center, or media center room.

I feel the book would be a positive addition to any library collection while encouraging students to read literature that portrays diverse, yet balanced views of all cultures. The book, Bud, not Buddy would be a welcome addition in any collection of books, making the collection a more balanced and inclusive collection of multi-cultural books that in turn help to make cultural diversity the foundation of learning and growing. Reference Curtis, C. P. (1999). Bud, not Buddy. New York: Delacorte Press.