FROM CHAMELEONS TO KOALAS:
EXPLORING AUSTRALIAN CULTURE WITH
PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS THROUGH
CHILDREN’S LITERATURE AND
INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the
Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

James W. Stiles, M.A.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University
2004

Dissertation Committee:                           Approved by

Professor Barbara Lehman, Advisor
Professor Anna Soter
Professor Cynthia Tyson

Advisor
College of Education
ABSTRACT

Peoples and cultures have been interacting since the dawn of history, but global conflict, recent advances in technology, and the changing demographics of the United States make peaceful coexistence in a multicultural world a matter of urgency for this and future generations. Although education is often cited as the key to the global village of tomorrow, little research has been done to explore how the lifeblood of literacy—the books of childhood that teach and entertain—can bridge cultures to connect worlds. This study seeks to address that very question by comparing the literary and lived experience of Australian culture with five pre-service teachers from the Midwestern United States. Children’s literature was the foundation for the project, first as the focus of pre-departure readings in the home country, and then as the basis for a researcher-led three-week study tour where participants met with authors, illustrators, students, teachers, and others as they experienced Australian culture first-hand. Reflective journaling, class discussions, participant observation, and a post-program debriefing yielded data that were analyzed through grounded theory. The developmental model of intercultural sensitivity, and its associated inventory, was used to contextualize response to the phenomenological experience of culture in both literary and lived experience.
Results of the study show that children’s literature can be an enjoyable and dynamic means to facilitate cross-cultural learning, serving as common ground and catalyst for intercultural exchange through each phase of the program. Theoretical benefits were argued then demonstrated for children’s literature as a tool in furthering global education with pre-service teachers. A five-stage model for cultural relativity is proposed that reflects the disparate ways in which culture is reflected in children’s literature, thus laying the groundwork for further study on national identity and cultural imperialism in global publishing for children.
DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my partner, Kevin Girard Gartner.

His endless support and tireless love kept body and spirit alive, helping me through each and every step of this incredible adventure.

It is also in appreciation of my parents, Albert and Barbara Stiles, who were the first to show me the joys of children’s literature and the wonders of international travel.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project would not have been possible without the support and assistance of many outstanding teachers, colleagues, friends, and students. I thank first my advisor, Barbara Lehman, a teacher, mentor, and friend whose sage advice and editorial brilliance inspired me each step of the way. I am forever indebted to Janet Hickman who taught me my first course in children’s literature, then wove me into her own Charlotte’s Web of books and their creators. To Anna Soter whose encouragement came at the most needed of times, I will always be grateful for your kind heart and open ear. And to Cynthia Tyson, thank you for never letting me forget that people can make a difference.

To my friends and colleagues in Australia, I am eternally grateful for your amazing generosity of time and spirit, and for the warm hospitality that made our experience worth writing about. Mary Jo Fresch, you set an incredible network into operation that made this study possible. To Howard Mould who found schools to host us, friends to dine with us, and authors to entertain us, thanks to you and Meredith for our first taste of vegemite and countless hours of wonderful conversation. Sophie and Kon, thanks for welcoming us into your hearts (and into your van). Agnus Nieuwenhuizen, your advocacy for children’s and young adult literature has built a model of inspiration. You brought us into your world and introduced us to some of Australia’s most amazing authors, too numerous to mention. Cheers to Juliet O’Conner, one of the few who
treasures the wealth of social history through children’s literature, to Ann James, a brilliant artist who teaches and inspires, to Meredith Costain and Paul Collins, fountains of story and keepers of chooks, and to Gail Moncrieff whose natural gift as an intercultural educator brought literary theory to life in one brief encounter. Boori Pryor, there is a magic in your soul that speaks to the heart, crossing oceans and cultures to change the world, one story at a time.

I am also grateful to many at the University of Dayton for six years of professional growth and opportunity in international education, the flexibility to continue my doctoral studies, and support with my pilot program.

And finally to Debbie, Kandice, Amber, Cheryl, and Kim. You helped a dream come true. Thank you for having the faith and making the journey.
VITA

September 7, 1961.......................... Born – Mt. Holly, NJ

1983............................................ A.B., Psychology, Dartmouth College

1988............................................ M.A., International Education
The George Washington University

1988 – 1989................................. Senior Program Coordinator, International Programs
The Washington Center

1990 – 1991................................. Program Director
Institute for Experiential Learning

1991 – 1995................................. Director, American Experience Programs
Tufts University

1995 – 1996................................. Substitute Teacher
Pinellas County, Florida

1996 – 2002................................. Director, Study Abroad
The University of Dayton

2001............................................ Children’s Literature International Summer School
The University of Surrey, Roehampton, England

2002 – 2004................................. Adjunct Professor
The Ohio State University

PUBLICATIONS


FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: Education
International/Global Education & Children’s Literature
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ........................................................................................................................................... ii

DEDICATION ....................................................................................................................................... iv

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ......................................................................................................................... v

VITA ......................................................................................................................................................... vii

LIST OF FIGURES ................................................................................................................................ xi

CHAPTERS

1. INTRODUCTION ................................................................................................................................. 1
   Research Questions ............................................................................................................................... 6
   Rationale ............................................................................................................................................... 7
   A Distinctively Outsider Perspective ................................................................................................. 9
   Research Design and Methodology ................................................................................................... 11
   Defining Culture and Cultural Understanding .................................................................................. 13
   Organization of Study ......................................................................................................................... 15

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE .................................................................................................................. 17
   Building a Unique Point of Inquiry .................................................................................................. 17
   Authorship and Authenticity .............................................................................................................. 20
   The National Dimension: Historical and Postcolonial Perspectives ............................................. 25
   The Struggle for U.S. and Australian National Identities ............................................................... 29
   International, Transcultural Context of Children’s Literature ....................................................... 35
   Defining Global and International Education .................................................................................... 41
   Conceptualizing Intercultural Experience ......................................................................................... 45
   The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) ........................................................ 51
   Assessing Impact of International Education ................................................................................... 56
   Preparing for the Future: Pre-service Teacher Education ............................................................... 62

3. METHODOLOGY .................................................................................................................................. 65
   Conceptual Framework: A Rationale for Qualitative Methodology .............................................. 65
   Role of Researcher ............................................................................................................................... 69
   Background of the Study ..................................................................................................................... 70
   The Participants ................................................................................................................................ 76
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program Design and Rationale</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selecting the Literature</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies of Response</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing: A Key to Learning</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase One: Pre-departure</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase Two: Immersion – The Ideal Model</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase Two: Immersion – The Reality</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase Three: Post-program Debriefing</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Management and Analysis</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishment of Trustworthiness</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview of Research Questions and Methodology</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. ANALYSIS OF DATA</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Place Far, Far Away</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access and Availability</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Chameleons</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Literary Feast</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Images of Culture in Nonfiction</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Tales of Nonfiction</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the Lighter Side: Wombat Diaries and Missing Bums</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Conceptual Model of Cultural Relativity</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worldly Wonders</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Chameleons</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Stories, Uncommon Elements</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Stories for Special People, Places, and Things</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Songs from the Heart</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature as Bridge Between Cultures</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature’s Role as a Pre-departure Exercise</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature’s Role in Enriching Experience On-site</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breaking the Ice</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeing New Connections, Finding Deeper Meanings</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becoming Literary Ambassadors</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing Context, Comparing Literary and Lived Experience</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping Us Be Human</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How the DMIS Stole Christmas</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furthering Global Education through Literature and Experience</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Deep Culture and Valuing Diversity</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raising Cultural Self-awareness</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Ongoing Learning Process</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying Inequities in Society and Education, Making Changes</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding Distinctions, Making Connections</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessing Resources and Fostering Collegiality</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing Cross-cultural Experiences and Reflection</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS .............................................. 217
   Introduction .............................................................................................................. 217
   A New Theoretical Model ....................................................................................... 219
   Catalyst and Common Ground for Intercultural Dialogue .................................. 223
   The Interplay Between Literary and Lived Experience ........................................ 226
   Becoming Global Educators .................................................................................... 227
   Limitations ............................................................................................................... 229
   Implications ............................................................................................................. 236
   Recommendations for Future Study ................................................................. 238
   Conclusion ............................................................................................................... 240

REFERENCES .............................................................................................................. 241
   Academic ................................................................................................................. 241
   Children’s Literature .............................................................................................. 253

APPENDICES

A. Program Application ............................................................................................... 256
B. Longer Novels and Chapter Books Featured as Class Texts ............................... 262
C. Pre-departure Journal Assignments ...................................................................... 265
D. Research Overview and Request for Participation ............................................ 267
E. Consent Form ......................................................................................................... 269
F. Pictorial Overview of Program ............................................................................ 271
G. Reflection Topics and Review of Journal Assignments .................................... 273
H. Permission to Use Iceberg Analogy and Kluckhohn Model ............................. 278
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Point of Inquiry ................................................................................................. 18
Figure 2: Iceberg Analogy of Internal and External Culture ............................................. 47
Figure 3: Kluckhohn Model.............................................................................................. 49
Figure 4: Overview of Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity ....................... 54
Figure 5: Interplay of Factors Impacting Methodological Design................................. 81
Figure 6: Timetable of Study ............................................................................................ 82
Figure 7: Ideal Cycle of Inquiry...................................................................................... 106
Figure 8: Example of Data Sources and Coding............................................................. 118
Figure 9: Model of Cultural Relativity in Children’s Literature................................. 153
Figure 10: Circular Model of Cultural Relativity in Children’s Literature ............... 170
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“Jimmy?” a voice called softly in the almost-empty fourth grade classroom. The other children had gone to recess, but I hadn’t moved. I was desperate to find out whether my namesake James would escape the clutches of his evil aunts Spiker and Sponge. *Could the marvelous peach carry him to safety?* Mere words on paper had drawn me into another, exciting world whose sights, sounds, and images had captured my entire being. *Faster, faster, just another…* Mr. Taylor’s gentle hand on my shoulder broke the spell, but the memory lingers on to this day. I had felt, even tasted, the power of story—and it was incredible.

I am certain that my early, positive experiences with classics such as *James and the Giant Peach* (Dahl, 1961), *Charlotte’s Web* (White, 1952), and *The Chronicles of Narnia* (Lewis, 1950-1956) helped fuel an adult interest in children’s literature. Story had the power to take me to new and exciting worlds, to places and times far away, and to neverlands yet to be. And for me, these early adventures were often fantasies where magic worked wonders, animals talked, and the rules of nature as I knew them were suspended, if only for the wink of a moment.
Like most children, my realm of story also included what was to be seen as the “real world.” Whether in fiction or nonfiction, through literature I also traveled to “real” places. Those literary journeys could be to other homes or neighborhoods just down the street, or to more exotic places in faraway China, India, Africa, or Europe. Through story and picture, I was introduced to characters of different racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds who shared their thoughts and feelings with a reader just as foreign. These were new, confusing, exciting, even terrifying worlds. However, they weren’t just invented out of thin air for my education or pleasure. They represented—directly or indirectly—real people, places, events, and cultures. And through my reading, I began to develop very definite concepts and images of a people I had not met, an experience I had not lived, and a land to which I had not traveled.

It is these thoughts—thirty years after I became lost in the bizarre worlds of Roald Dahl—that challenged me to explore the power of story through the critical eye of an adult reader, and to join the language, literacy, and culture program of Ohio State. As a result, over the past four years I have been immersed in an exploration that would introduce me to children’s literature, language, and learning, as well as the social dynamics of culture, power, and privilege that so dramatically influence our lives as educators, and the lives of our students.

As I debated how to explore the world of story and its ability to engage readers with people, places, and things from far away lands, it seemed only natural to compare the literary experience to the lived one. My parents had always valued travel as essential to personal growth and development, considering it as important as any lessons learned in
the classroom. They would often speak fondly of my father’s service in military intelligence immediately following World War II when they both lived for a year in Salzburg, Austria. They witnessed a time of celebration and tension, and learned what it was like to be a stranger in a strange land. As a young child, I heard often of this magical land filled with snowcapped mountains and beautiful castles, open air markets, mouth watering schnitzel, mysterious sausages called “wursts,” and rich chocolate torts that were but things of fantasy in the suburbs of southern New Jersey.

My own first visions of Austria were crafted by Rogers and Hammerstein as majestic landscapes brought to life on the silver screen by Julie Andrews in “The Sound of Music.” Then later, at the age of twelve, I would live my own adventures in the streets and hilltops of Salzburg as my parents brought their memories to life, escorting us on a grand tour of Europe. The lure of new places and exotic worlds began a love of travel that continued through a semester abroad during college to Bourges, France, and then on a trip with my father to China in the early 1980s. These experiences all helped spur a career in international education where I would build programs and opportunities for others to experience bits of the world, one journey at a time.

All of this is part of my life today, and how I came to be at a small airport in the Midwest on the evening of June 15, 2003. I stood with five people who were but strangers nine months before, bags scattered in every direction and loved ones clinging to say good bye. These five had been my students throughout the year and were preparing for a career in teaching. The six of us were headed for a three-week trip “Down Under,” to a place called Australia that lay half a world away.
We shared a love of children, education, literature, and travel. I had invited their dreams to become mine, to explore another world through both children’s literature and lived experience. Although our physical journey was just beginning, our literary one had been underway for quite some time. For the past three months, we had been immersed in the world of Australian children’s literature, reading works available in the U.S. as well as texts imported directly from Australia. We explored literature as a gateway to a foreign land, using text and illustrations as a bridge between cultures. Once in Australia, we would then become literary ambassadors as we visited schools, libraries, bookstores, and literature collections, plus met with authors, illustrators, teachers, scholars, and students—a wide range of people connected to all aspects of children’s literature. We would also meet “just plain folks,” eat new foods, see the sights, and try to do anything else we could imagine to experience what it means to be in Australia.

Several in the group had traveled little outside of the United States; none had been to Australia. My own travel experience had been mostly to Europe, Africa, and Asia; I made only one ten-day trip to Australia to plan our adventure and to do preliminary work for my research. We were filled with excitement and anxiety; expectations abounded. What would we see of Australia and her people? How could we gain appreciation for a vast and diverse country in such a short time? How would children’s literature play into all of this?

These questions began with the daydreams of a fourth grade student who had grown to become a teacher and professional “pied piper” in academia. However, others have shared many of these thoughts as well. As I learned through my study at Ohio
State, the world of international children’s literature is quirky and fascinating, energized as well as neglected, filled with an intriguing history and a wealth of untapped potential. We would be exploring that world, living through its ideals and testing its potential.

We would be keeping alive both a tradition and a passion that others fought so diligently to inspire. In the aftermath of World War II, Jella Lepman saw both the need and the opportunity for children’s literature to reach across chasms of fear and hate to build a bridge of hope for a new generation (Lepman, 2002). War and politics had decimated the libraries: What was left to teach and entertain, delight and engage Europe’s children? Her work led to an amazing campaign that mobilized nations around the globe to send money, books, and hope across borders. Early, tentative ideas became realities through the establishment of the International Youth Library in Munich, and later the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY).

These organizations live on to further these goals, but more research is needed to understand the complex interplay between literature, lived experience, and cultural understanding. Freeman and Lehman (2001) suggest in *Global Perspectives in International Children's Literature* that “children’s literature with a global perspective is an appropriate, interesting, and enjoyable way for students to gain knowledge and understanding” (p. 12). Similarly, Mildred Batchelder, an early advocate for the role of children’s literature in cross-cultural understanding, asserts that “to know the classic stories of a country creates a climate, an attitude for understanding the people for whom the literature is a heritage” (from Freeman & Lehman, 2001, p. 9). Would this be the case for our group? Could children’s literature serve as a bridge between cultures,
helping enrich our understanding of Australian culture as well as our experience overseas? What are its possibilities and its limitations? How can teachers be educated to understand and use children’s literature as a tool for cross-cultural exploration? This is the heart of my study. Following is an introduction to that endeavor.

**Research Questions**

Cross-cultural understanding will be explored in three key areas: Children’s Literature, International Education, and Pre-service Teacher Education. Each area clearly overlaps and informs the others, but for conceptual clarity I identify the following questions within each realm. Each area of inquiry begins with a main question that is then supported by a number of more specific, guiding questions. The research questions are:

1. **Children’s Literature – The Literary Experience**

   How can children’s literature serve as a bridge between Australian and U.S. cultures?

   For cultural outsiders reading Australian children’s literature, what images, concepts, ideas, and stories are evoked? What meanings are constructed, and through which genre(s)? How do these meanings compare to pre-existing notions of Australian Culture?

2. **International Education – The Lived Experience**

   How can engagement with children’s literature enrich an immersion experience for its participants?

   How can engagement with Australian children’s literature serve as a pre-departure exercise? Can this type of experience lead to a richer, more meaningful understanding of the culture while on-site? If so, how?
How does the literary experience compare to the lived experience and what does this say about how we draw meaning from the world?

3. Pre-service Teacher Education – The Professional Experience

How can immersion in the children’s literature of another culture, as well as an overseas lived experience, support and further the goals of global education for pre-service teachers?

How can the study of children’s literature help develop critical literacy and an appreciation for the cultural, social, political, and economic factors that impact education in the United States?

Rationale

I have chosen specifically to bring together three areas of scholarship and practice: children’s literature, international education, and pre-service teacher education. However, what gaps of knowledge and understanding will this study hope to fill? Why is this study needed and what benefit might it have for academia and society?

I begin with my subject population: pre-service teachers. The changing demographics of the United States show that teachers will increasingly be called upon to teach students from culturally diverse backgrounds (Banks & Banks, 1997; Diamond & Moore, 1995). Also, as world events make clear and global educators point out, there is a pressing need to help our students see beyond the horizon of their homes and neighborhoods to understand other people and cultures who are inextricably connected to their lives on this planet (McFadden, Merryfield, & Barron, 1997; Merryfield, 2000; Merryfield, Jarchow, & Pickert, 1997). This is the climate in which our teachers will be expected to perform. Thus, the population I address is both worthy of study and under
increasing pressure to gain more knowledge and expertise in cross-cultural issues. Research in this area will impact both academia and society at large.

Second, education majors have tended to be among the least represented populations for undergraduate study abroad for United States institutions (Davis, 2001). McFadden, Merryfield, and Barron (1997) note that overseas experiences are a significant part of global and international education and recommend that “teacher educators provide teachers with cross-cultural experiences and reflection” (p. 16). Thus, research that explores innovative ways to expand offerings for pre-service teachers and to tailor programming to the specific needs of this population is appropriate and needed.

And finally, why the children’s literature dimension? Scholars have explored children’s literature from a range of literary perspectives including: general/critical (Hunt, 1999; Soter, 1999; Stephens, 1992; Stephens & McCallum, 1998), feminist (Warner, 1994); historic (Darton, 1932; Hunt, 2001; Silvey, 1995; Townsend, 1996), postcolonial (Bradford, 2001; Kutzer, 2000; McGillis, 2000), psychological (Bettelheim, 1975; Cashdan, 1999; Jones, 1995; Tatar, 1987; Zipes, 1997), and Victorian studies (Berry, 1999). In the field of education, scholarship has combined literary and applied perspectives to produce comprehensive textbooks on children’s literature (Huck, Hepler, Hickman, & Kiefer, 2001; Norton, 1999; Sutherland, 1997), briefer texts and overviews (Galda & Cullinan, 2002; Hickman & Cullinan, 1989; Tunnell & Jacobs, 2000), and specific strategies for teaching with children’s literature (Sorensen & Lehman, 1995). Still others have addressed children’s literature from multicultural and international
perspectives (Freeman & Lehman, 2001; Jobe, 1993; Pratt & Beaty, 1999). How will my scholarship be different?

I argue that few scholars have explored children’s literature from a contemporary, ethnographic perspective to examine what we can learn about people and their culture through the study of their children’s literature. Although some work has been done on transcultural education with children using children’s literature, often in a traditional classroom context (Cotton, 2000), I suggest that a combined exploration of children’s literature, international education, and pre-service teacher education adds a new dimension to the scholarship in the field. Moreover, this stance embraces a position often maligned or ignored in the realm of cross-cultural studies: the outsider perspective. As noted below, I argue that this stance is both appropriate and informative, particularly for the population under study.

A Distinctively Outsider Perspective

What can a group of cultural outsiders—including myself as a researcher—possibly contribute to the scholarly study of Australian children’s literature through this endeavor? Australian authors such as Lees and Macintyre (1993), McVitty (1989), and Saxby (1993) have all written extensively on the history of Australian children’s literature. Bradford’s (1996) collection of essays by noted scholars of Australian children’s literature—titled *Writing the Australian Child*—offers fascinating, in-depth analyses from postcolonial, psychological, and cultural perspectives. For example, Bradford’s (1996) critique of *Possom Magic* (Fox, 1983) offers a challenging
postcolonial interpretation of this seemingly benign, highly exported tale. Will cultural outsiders be able to recognize such nuances as they form images of Australian culture through children’s literature? Bradford cautions: “Within the complex web of social practices through which picture books are produced and mediated, there is [a] danger: that of falling into the habit of reading as normal and natural the imperialist ideologies that survive in a postcolonial literary culture” (p. 110). Bradford offers an important caution, as well as a reason for stepping outside of the habituated insider positions that may become desensitized to such practices.

Given the nuances of Australian culture and the varied ways its reflections can be seen in children’s literature, I would be open to severe criticism if my goal was to enter a foreign culture, to become knowledgeable in its realm of children’s literature, and then to train future teachers to be similarly expert in a few short weeks. That is not my goal at all. The purpose of my study is to recognize and explore the distinctively outsider perspective that we bring to Australian children’s literature, and the understandings that derive from its encounter. As Soter (1997) acknowledges, “While educators may readily admit that reading books by writers of other cultures provides us with a rich and immensely enjoyable literary experience, as well as some understanding of those cultures, our starting point for engagement and interpretation will be different from that of ‘insiders’” (p. 215). It is that very status, the dynamic of being outside of a culture that I seek to celebrate and examine.

I suggest that exploring this outsider perspective is ideal for pre-service teachers in that the study focuses as much, or more, on the process of learning about culture in
general as on learning about one particular culture. It is hoped that this process approach will lead to transferability in other settings and with other cultures. As classroom teachers, the pre-service teachers participating in my study will be faced daily with the challenge of teaching about peoples and cultures to which they are distinctively outsiders. Thus, research exploring the dynamics of this educational reality is not only appropriate, but necessary.

**Research Design and Methodology**

This is a qualitative study that explores the potentialities of a distinct viewpoint (the outsider perspective) in combination with three areas of scholarship and practice that are not widely interrelated: children’s literature, international education, pre-service teacher training. I relate these three areas of scholarship and practice to the three types of experience that I sought to facilitate and compare through the study: literary, lived, and professional. To narrow my third area—pre-service teacher training and preparing for professional experience as a teacher—I consider how the goals of global education can be furthered through this unique tri-part combination.

To create the experiences I intended to study, I devised a three-phase methodological design that blended the reading of children’s literature of a target culture with the lived experience in that culture. This strategy then resulted in a “program” that I both administered and studied for this project. Phase one is termed “pre-departure” and involved reading and discussing the target culture literature over a six-month period while in the home environment. Phase two is termed “immersion” and involved a three-
week study abroad experience in the target culture utilizing children’s literature as a focus. Experiences in the immersion phase included: lectures, tours, reading, seminar discussions, meetings with authors/illustrators, classroom visits in K-12 schools, and general sight seeing. Phase three consisted of a post-program debriefing conducted back in the home environment, held approximately six weeks following the immersion phase.

To address the third dimension of teacher education, I limited my population to pre-service teachers, then selected five participants for the study using purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990). The target culture was also selected purposefully, with criteria including access and availability of children’s literature and related resources in-country, language compatibility, student and researcher interests.

Core data for the study were participant reflections and journal comments made in response to the children’s literature and to all aspects of the immersion phase overseas. Transcriptions of seminar meetings, as well as informal interviews and participant observation (Glesne, 1999) through all three phases of the program, yielded additional sources. Data were analyzed and coded using constant comparative analysis and grounded theory to identify emerging themes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glesne, 1999).

Trustworthiness is essential for any research endeavor. I followed recommendations made by Creswell (1998) and Glesne (1999) by conducting peer reviews, member checks, and negative case analyses. As suggested by Lincoln and Guba (2000), I attended to researcher bias by placing myself clearly in the study as both observer and participant, attempting to chronicle and challenge my construction of meaning through a reflexive journal. My research design afforded multiple data sources
gathered at strategic points in time throughout the program, thus facilitating the triangulation of data and the crystallization of findings (Richardson, 2000).

All of these strategies led to a program of great intensity that explored new and interesting connections between children’s literature and international experience, seen through the lens of pre-service teachers preparing to become intercultural educators.

**Defining Culture and Cultural Understanding**

Woven throughout this study are complex issues of culture and the underlying goal of promoting cross-cultural understanding. Given the various ways in which such concepts can be interpreted, I begin by clarifying my understanding of the terms as used in this study. Kohls (2001) defines culture in an anthropological context, describing it as:

> an integrated system of learned behavior patterns that are characteristic of the members of any given society. Culture refers to the total way of life of particular groups of people. It includes everything that a group of people thinks, says, does, and makes—its systems of attitudes and feelings. Culture is learned and transmitted from generation to generation. (p. 25)

I view this definition as a good starting point, but note that postmodern perspectives see culture as fragmented, problematizing the notion of culture as an integrating whole (Featherstone, 1997; Gergen, 2000). The proliferation of mass culture and the decentering of once-dominant metanarratives leads to “the inability to order the fragmented culture [and to] an aestheticization of everyday life through the inability to chain together signs and images into a meaningful narrative” (Featherstone, p. 76). I suggest viewing culture as having elements of cohesion and unity within a group, but at the same time demanding space for competing views, conflict, and discourse in a
postmodern context. This is a fluid, dynamic view of culture that may well challenge any attempts to identify unifying aspects of either “Australian” or “United States” cultures.

What, then, is cross-cultural understanding? First, I suggest that it is the gaining of appreciation for the very complexity of the term “culture” as a construct. This includes exploring both the anthropological as well as postmodern conceptualizations noted above. Second, in the context of this study, I suggest it means exploring the lived experience of participants as they read, travel, interact with others, and eventually teach in culturally diverse environments. How do they perceive culture and the way in which it is reflected in the world around us? This second, more pragmatic, phenomenological focus touches on the domain of intercultural training and encompasses a sophistication of thought about the relationships among cultures as well as a knowledge of mediating such differences (Bennett, 1993).

This study is, in effect, an exploration of how culture itself is perceived through both literature and lived experience. But also, it is an attempt to see whether a program based on the unique combination of children’s literature and international experience for pre-service teachers can help illustrate the complexities of culture and the dynamics of cultural interactions, thus furthering cross-cultural understanding. As described in the next chapter, Bennett’s (1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity will be introduced as one framework through which I will explore the more elusive concept of cross-cultural understanding.
Organization of Study

This study is presented in five chapters. This first chapter introduces the study, establishes the research questions to be explored, and provides a rationale for their significance. An overview of the methodology and research design that will be employed to address those questions is provided, thus helping to set the stage for what is to come. Culture and cultural understanding are defined as threads that will be woven throughout the study overall.

The second chapter reviews prior scholarship that informs the present effort, placing this one study within the context of the larger academic community. A unique point of inquiry is established that combines literary, lived, and professional experience, thus building a foundation for the findings that will be presented. Theoretical ties are drawn to connect those areas while the benefits of such a combination are introduced.

The third chapter develops the conceptual framework of qualitative inquiry that articulates how I view the research process itself, and the ways in which I propose to draw meaning from this study. Each step of the study’s history, design, and implementation is reviewed to describe what I did, why I did it, and how I did it in ways that will build trust in the findings I present.

Chapter four presents the actual findings of the study, inviting the reader to experience parts of that journey, to hear the voices, and to share the stories of an amazing adventure. A new theoretical model is presented which helps to relate the wide range of literature that we encountered, as well as the varied responses to those works that our group experienced. The theoretical links made in chapter two between three disparate
fields of study are shown to have real, tangible benefits in supporting the goals of global education.

Chapter five summarizes the study, reviews the major findings and their implications, discusses its limitations, then recommends areas for future research. This chapter rejoins the spirit that began this endeavor, looking both to the past and the future as it completes the circle of inquiry.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Building a Unique Point of Inquiry

One of the exciting aspects of this study is that it offers a rather fresh point of inquiry by combining three domains that are not traditionally addressed together: children’s literature, international education, and pre-service teacher preparation. This relatively unique focus, and the breadth that results from the combination, is its strength. However, when it comes to synthesizing prior scholarship and constructing the literature review, the potential territory to cover is vast. Each area is rigorously addressed by scholars, and could easily constitute a single study. Moreover, dynamics in each area are fluid. How, then, to use Richardson’s (2000) terminology, would I lay the foundation for a complex “crystallization” of findings I might hope to argue later?

Galvan (1999) suggests that “the literature review will provide the basic rationale for your research” (p. 13). Since a key feature of my study is a relatively unique combination of perspectives, I will consider each body of knowledge as adding layers of context that focuses my study. Each subsequent layer builds upon, interacts with, and extends the previous layer, ultimately leading to my point of inquiry. My discussion will begin with perspectives rooted in the United States, for that is the first tenet of our “outsider” perspective. I will add Australian perspectives, for that is the particular target
culture of the study, as well as perspectives and scholarship from other cultures to the
degree that they add meaning and understanding to our mission. Because of
commonalities among perspectives, they will be intertwined throughout rather than
presented as distinctive, or even oppositional views. It will be the points of intersection
that I seek to illuminate, not the entirety of a vast tradition of scholarship.

As a visual guide for the literature review, I offer the model below. Before
addressing the specific scholarship, I will provide a brief overview.

![Figure 1: Point of Inquiry](image)

I have placed children’s literature as the foundation of this endeavor and will
build that as the largest layer, tier one. I will argue that, in the United States,
multicultural advocates are particularly vocal about cultural representation in children’s
literature and provide a meaningful grounding point. The first layer of tier one, inspired by debates in the multicultural arena, begins with issues most related to the text itself: authorship and cultural authenticity. A second layer will be developed which extends the individual text into the larger, national, social and cultural environments from which it stems. A third layer of context will look beyond the issues of a single nation or cultural interaction to explore scholarship that has addressed children’s literature from a transnational, or global perspective. This third layer will be a logical place to explore theory and strategies of textual inquiry at some of the broadest, most intercultural dimensions.

Tier two extends the context into the lived experience overseas through the international education dimension of this endeavor. At this level, I begin by addressing distinctions between global and international education, then explore theory and research that seeks to illuminate the purpose for, and dynamics of, intercultural experience. I then provide a rationale for considering the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (Bennett, 1993) as a unifying structure. Finally, an overview of empirical research is offered to provide a context for discussion of present findings in light of past intercultural research.

The third tier acknowledges that the participants are pre-service teachers and that their participation in the study both stems from a desire to read, understand, and then use international children’s literature in the classroom. Global education will be revisited to support the overall rationale for this endeavor with brief comparisons made to other intercultural training efforts in pre-service teacher education. This is seen as the most
speculative context of my study, flavoring the project with expectations of an emerging professional experience “yet to be.”

I begin now with tier one.

**Authorship and Authenticity**

Considerable work has been done to explore children’s literature, social history, and cultural representation. Scholars in the field of multicultural education and literature are often quite outspoken on the issues, having long recognized the problematic stereotypes and images that many cultural groups have endured (Banks & Banks, 1997; Diamond & Moore, 1995; Harris, 1993; Pinsent, 1997). Citing a literary history of perpetuating negative images and furthering cross-cultural misunderstanding, efforts in this area have often focused on fostering inclusion and responsible portrayal of cultural groups in literature. “Because multicultural literature is about groups who are typically underrepresented and often inaccurately or negatively portrayed in literature, we recommend that multicultural literature be evaluated carefully for authentic and accurate images of the cultures it represents” (Diamond & Moore, 1995, p. 44).

A recent collection of essays by experts on cultural authenticity in children’s literature edited by Fox and Short (2003) highlights the complexity of the issue, and the discordant voices that echo in the halls of academia. Fox and Short suggest pointedly that “cultural authenticity in children’s literature is one of those contentious issues that seems to resurface continuously, always eliciting strong emotions and a wide range of perspectives” (p. 3). A respected authority on African-American children’s literature and
keen observer of the history of debate over cultural authenticity, Bishop (2003) admits that “the ‘insider/outsider’ dichotomy is still at the core of arguments over cultural authenticity” (p. 28). Sharpening that divide are underlying tensions in our racialized society, and disturbing realities of the publishing industry in the United States. Noting Horning, Kruse, and Schleisman’s (2002) review of children’s books published in 2001, Bishop reminds us that cultural insiders are still writing only half of the books published about African or African-American people and cultures.

Australian scholars of children’s literature identify similar dynamics in their publishing industries, with issues surrounding Aboriginal culture taking center stage in the debate. Bradford (2001) notes that “While the number of children’s books produced by indigenous authors and illustrators has increased significantly since the 1980’s, it is still the case that most texts thematising Aboriginality are produced by non-indigenous authors and illustrators within mainstream publishing houses, and are thus susceptible to the appropriating effects that can occur when Aboriginality is filtered through Western perspectives” (p. 131).

Noted author of young adult literature Jacqueline Woodson (2003) joins in applauding the publishing trend to include more books about parallel cultures, but shares a similar concern about the degree of outsider representation. She urges her criticism to be seen not as an attempt to keep Whites from publishing about Blacks, but as a call for those most central to the issues, those who have lived them, to be given voice. She writes, “This movement isn’t about white people; it’s about people of color. We want the chance to tell our own stories, to tell them honestly and openly” (p. 45).
Seto (2003), a Japanese-American writer who has spent considerable time in the Middle East, writes even more passionately on the negative ramifications of outsider representation. In a chilling comparison, Seto equates an outsider’s attempt to write deeply from another cultural perspective to the superficial donning of a caricaturized Halloween mask for fun and profit. Although perhaps well-meaning, these authors perpetuate cultural stereotypes that fuel racism and cultural misunderstanding. Seto frames the argument as one of cultural capital, urging “Euro-American writers to look again at the issue of cultural thievery. There are very real consequences to it, especially in books for children” (p. 96).

Similarly, Pryor (1998) addresses the sacred and communal sense of story in an Aboriginal context, arguing that some stories are the property of the community. Moreover, even members of that community need to seek appropriate permission from community leaders before sharing those stories in public; some hold such profound significance that they should never be told to certain audiences, or outside of proscribed settings within the community.

Arguing for an opposing tension in the debate, Aronson (2003) draws our attention to the fact that cultures have been interacting for centuries, borrowing one from another to yield an inherent hybridity. Echoing Yolen’s (2000) sentiments that “stories lean on stories, cultures on cultures” (p. 15), Aronson argues that excessive attention to insider status leads to a quest for “the false certitudes of ethnic essentialism” (p. 82). His position is one of protecting artistic freedom, yet tempering it with responsibility:

I repeat, I am not suggesting a return to the days of white authors doing pallid books about “exotic” people. Instead I am challenging all authors to trust their
passions, while still demanding the highest standards of artistry, honesty, and understanding. I want to create more options and opportunities for all talented and committed artists, no matter how they fill out their census forms. (p. 82)

As Harris (2003) points out, Aronson’s argument extends to the politics of recognition in the publishing industry and includes a hotly contested proposition to eliminate race-based literary awards.

Engaging with the debate over cultural authenticity in children’s literature is a decidedly frenetic experience. It is like watching a championship tennis match, only the rules are still being negotiated mid-play. Powerful serve is returned with an equally powerful backhand, yet calls for “foul” come from a host of line watchers, each drawing the boundaries to their own specifications. Critical theorists reel at the power dynamics of it all, while those in the galleries—individual readers, students, and scholars like the participants in my study—struggle to make sense of a very crazy game.

I offer the metaphor of game with specific intent. The issues surrounding cultural authenticity will, most likely, never be “resolved.” Rather, key players will gather from time to time to serve and volley, trying to perfect their play while others argue over rules for the exchange. By the very nature of my study with its focus on cultural representation and children’s literature, I have asked to be part of that game. The above discussion on insider/outsider perspectives on cultural authenticity brings to the forefront a dynamic that influences both the perceptions that we will gather through our study as well as the context in which our findings will be viewed in a larger academic arena.

Bishop (2003), clearly aware of the heated tenor of the authenticity game, offers a four-part strategy. First, she argues for a fresh approach to the meaning of cultural
authenticity, in part through more scholarship of literature from parallel cultures to extend our knowledge base. “Close critical examination of the work can reveal the distinctive features of a body of literature and thereby provide some sense of what ‘culturally authentic’ literature from a particular group looks like” (p. 30). Second, she advocates for greater respect and tolerance within the academic debate itself, suggesting that “it might turn down the heat if writers acknowledged and accepted the existence and validity of various kinds of criticism” (p. 30). Third, Bishop notes that the perception of a shared American experience may lead writers to a false sense of security when writing about parallel cultures and calls for greater respect for the “difficulties of writing outside one’s culture” (p. 31). Finally, she offers that “it might be useful to understand what ideological positions underlie or motivate the creation of books about members of parallel-culture groups and how those differing motivations are reflected in the texts” (p. 32). This final suggestion helps to address cultural thievery noted earlier by Woodson (2003) and Seto (2003).

This first layer of the foundation for my study—the dynamics of cultural authenticity—speaks to authorial qualifications and issues related to the production of the text itself. But, the multicultural movement also adds a second dimension by placing issues of accuracy and representation within the larger, systemic forces that continue to perpetuate cross-cultural conflict and racism in the United States. Taxel (1993) argues:

Discussions about the sociocultural and political dimensions of literature have become part of a broader critique of society that, among many things, seeks to explain how and why ideologies such as racism and sexism are so ingrained in consciousness as to become part of our common-sense understanding of how the world works. (p. 11)
Advocates in this area seek to problematize these dysfunctional ideologies, seeing children’s literature as both a victim of past ideology as well as an agent for positive social change.

The following section explores that second, broader dimension by examining children’s literature in a national context.

**The National Dimension: Historical and Postcolonial Perspectives**


In varying forms and contexts, each of these histories sheds light on how children’s literature shaped ideas of self and other, working often in unseen ways to help weave the fabric of culture over time. A brief example from the history of British imperialism will bring to the forefront the dynamics of culture, children’s literature, and national identity, illustrating the potential for inquiry at this level. Whereas the United
States and Australia are both former colonies sharing a legacy of imperialism, this example is a most appropriate common ground.

In a study of children’s literature and empire, Kutzer (2000) notes that British children’s texts from the late nineteenth century to the beginnings of World War II “reflect imperialism and empire as a normal part of the world and often encourage child readers to accept the values of imperialism” (p. xiii). Moreover, Kutzer argues, “without the ideology of imperialism, expansion of empire is impossible, and it is this ideology that is omnipresent in classic British children’s books” (p. xvii).

Kutzer (2000) critiques such works as Kipling’s *The Jungle Books* (1894) and suggests that there are important messages lying behind these fantasy-laced tales of adventure:

> The story also functions as an allegory of imperialism. Kipling quite carefully orders his animals in a hierarchy that is dependent upon birth and upon caste, and emphasizes that convincing others to obey orders is at the heart of successful governments. Obeying orders—obeying the Law—is at the heart of Mowgli’s jungle, too, but that Law has explicit imperial overtones. (p. 31)

Other critics such as Byrne and McQuillan (1999), McGillis (1999), and Zipes (1997) agree as they point to modern-day works such as Disney’s film *The Lion King* to suggest that imperial notions of hierarchy and the sovereign right to rule live on as neocolonialism.

Kutzer (2000) also finds parallels to the imperialist mentality in Milne’s *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926) and *The House at Pooh Corner* (1928). Kutzer argues:

> Christopher Robin’s interactions with the animals mimes the imaginative play of children, where they often position themselves as rulers of imaginative worlds, a comfort when they are not rulers in their own, realistic worlds at all: they are children, small and relatively powerless in a land of giant adults. (p. 95).
Nodelman (1996) expands on the idea of imperialism within the child’s world, noting the power and influence adults have on children. Children’s literature overall—a product written primarily by adults for children—does not stem from a position of equality. Nodelman challenges us to consider childhood itself as a focus of adult imperialism; literature is but one tool in the process.

Kutzer (2000) places the Pooh stories in an historical context and posits that Milne’s choice of animals also reflects the real-world ties of British Empire. Kanga, a kangaroo, represents Australia, and Tigger, a Tiger, is the emblem of India. The invisible Heffalump (we gather an elephant) could represent both Africa and India. Since the stories are based on actual stuffed animals that inhabited the nursery of Milne’s son Christopher (Silvey, 1995), we might dismiss the connection as happenchance and unintentional. However, Kutzer presents an intriguing argument for the pervasiveness of imperialism as a social phenomenon in its waning years following World War I:

By the twenties empire is so interwoven into British life, social and private as well as political and public, that it makes an almost unavoidable appearance in children’s nurseries and in children’s stories. Empire, by the twenties, no longer presents the possibility for high adventure and heroic deeds: empire had been literally domesticated into nursery toys, stuffed tigers and kangaroos and elephants. (p. 99)

Hunt and Sands (1999) suggest a more indeterminate read than Kutzer (2000) of imperialism in some British children’s literature, citing Kipling’s *Puck of Pook’s Hill* (1906) and Grahame’s *Wind in the Willows* (1908) as examples. They argue that these texts were written as Victorian values decayed, reflecting a degree of ambivalence toward empire, at times with an element of subversion: “In the new century, and notably in the
wake of the traumatic first World War, this ambivalence toward empire increased in children’s literature: “it both subverted and supported the ideology of empire” (Hunt and Sands, p. 45). Their comment helps illustrate children’s literature as a fluid product of human creation, crafted by the author and influenced by the social climate in which it is produced.

As British society changed, so too did its literature, and the years following World War II would see a rise in the popularity of animal fantasy and a reverence toward hearth and home. However, Hunt and Sands (1999) still see subtle, but important, imperialist influences:

The Wide World as represented in British animal fantasies has little to recommend it, and characters peer out at it from cages or scurry back home as soon as possible. The outsiders are the enemies, foreigners in a world of British rule, creating unconsciously racist and isolationist worlds for the child reader to confront. (p. 47)

Thus, for more than a century, the changing notions of imperialism were both reflected and supported by the children’s literature of its time. Postcolonial critics, among others, carry on an impassioned debate as to imperialism’s legacy and its ongoing influence on the world economy, ideas of self and Other, and the daily life of people throughout the world.

Historical and postcolonial perspectives on the connections between children’s literature, culture and national/cultural identity tend to present a relatively cohesive sociopolitical dynamic with a prevailing dominant ideology. However, since at least the 1960s, the discourse surrounding national identity in both Australia and the United States has been one of contest and conflict, characterized more by an emerging multivocality.
and the postmodern fragmentation of culture argued by Gergen (1991). A brief overview of both countries will help complete the national layer, and lay a context for considering the social climate in which the literature in my study was both created and read.

The Struggle for U.S. and Australian National Identities

McCallum (1997) notes that “Australia, like many post-colonial societies is preoccupied with notions of a national identity” (p. 101). McCallum goes on to suggest a framework that shapes the present-day debate:

More recent discussions of nationalism tend to be constructed around a dialogue between an established Anglo-Celtic model which is informed by a nostalgia for an idealised rural colonial past and which stresses homogeneity, and a newer multicultural model which stresses the diversity, multiplicity and heterogeneity which characterizes contemporary Australian society. (¶ 3)

Part of that idealized past is linked to the “romantic bush myth and a traditional version of nationalism which circumscribes an authentic ‘Australian’ identity within a rural and masculine paradigm” (¶ 12). McCallum notes a degree of solipsism in this tradition and sees the struggle for a multicultural identity tied to the “social landscape” and an emergent intersubjectivity.

Arguing for the benefits of a transdisciplinary approach to the study and critique of children’s literature, Stephens (1996) finds “essentially humanist ideologies pervading Australian children’s literature and the predominantly middle-class, conservative, Western European culture that mediates—and often produces—this literature” (p. 162). More specifically, he suggests the following:

Australian children’s literature, in its production and dissemination, is heavily committed to particular values and processes: it seeks to promote maturation,
liberation and transcendence as shaped by a humanistic vision of moral commitment and altruism, courage, dignity, strength, social competence, spiritual progress, enlightened attitudes towards issues of gender and ethnicity, and so on. (p. 163)

Agreeing with McCallum (1996) on the multicultural dynamics that struggle for claim to an Australian identity, Stephens suggests that a “humanistic cultural studies” approach has the potential to mediate the differences.

Despite the growing visibility of multicultural perspectives in Australia, scholars such as Bradford (2001) challenge that the critical stance exploring children’s literature is underutilized, even marginalized, in academia, particularly with regard to Aboriginal studies. Bradford finds that “books for children are scarcely ever referred to in discussions of Aboriginal representation in Australian texts, or in studies of Aboriginal writing, as though they don’t count as real books, or as though they are only children’s books, produced merely to entertain young readers and existing in an ideology-free zone” (p. 8). Bradford’s recent text Reading Race: Aboriginality in Australian Children’s Literature (2001) seeks to address that gap and argues convincingly that “children’s books offer a rich resource for considering how generations of Australians have been positioned to understand Aboriginal culture, relations between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, and relationships between Aboriginality and national identity” (p. 9).

A contemporary discourse on national identity in the United States shares many qualities with the Australian. Namely, the tensions of an increasingly multicultural community coping with an Anglo-European postcolonial heritage. The earlier discussion of multiculturalism and cultural authenticity is clearly a shared context. However, there are some interesting contrasts. The European and Australian scholarship on children’s
literature I reviewed spoke rather openly of a national—albeit contested—identity. However, discourse surrounding national identity and children’s literature of the United States lacked a similar visibility. The following examples help illustrate the competing ideologies at play and suggest that underlying values are often defined more implicitly, and outside of a nationalistic framework.

In her comprehensive review of United States social history and children’s literature, Murray (1998) raises the near hopeless task of defining an emergent present. She captures the essence of indeterminacy in the United States, and the challenges that lay ahead:

Clearly, a white middle-class voice is not the only one heard at this juncture. What recent immigrants from Laos want for their children, and the values they hope to inculcate, will differ dramatically from those of a ranching family in Wyoming, a Puerto Rican family in New York City, or a wealthy African-American family in Atlanta. (p. 211)

Certainly, this argument can apply to other countries as well. But, do the depth and breadth of U.S. physical and cultural diversity make our issues more contentious?

Adding to the difficulty is a polarization of ideology in the U.S. Multicultural advocates support the integrity of distinct cultural viewpoints, and are often associated with liberal positions and calls for “strength through diversity.” These views are countered by conservatives such as E. D. Hirsch (1993) and William Bennett (1993, 1995) who argue for the continued dominance of Western traditions and values which, they say, leads to strength and harmony through adherence to a single moral code. Is our scholarship caught between conflicting voices, each competing for dominance? What seems to be lacking in the United States is a humanistic approach that Stephens (1996)
suggests could bridge those deeply divided beliefs. This area seems ripe for further exploration.

A second point to note is the way in which culture is reflected and discussed in mainstream U.S. scholarship on children’s literature. In trying to identify how scholars conceptualized U.S. cultural characteristics, I noticed that cultural values were revealed in at least two ways. First, through the fairly distinct multicultural lens. Examples of the viewpoints in this vein were discussed earlier. The second, however, was much harder to detect, often woven throughout the text as an underlying educational philosophy of the author and/or scholarly community, or perhaps as a value seen by the author as culturally universal or desirable. Unless discussed from a transcultural or global perspective (the minority of writers and thus outside of what I would call mainstream), embedded values were not identified or given a cultural identity. Two examples will help illustrate this point.

The comprehensive text *Literature for Today’s Young Adults* by Nilsen and Donelson (2001) reviews celebrated young adult literature from 1967 to 1999 and identifies six defining characteristics. One characteristic addresses the young adult’s desire to prove him or herself and “take credit” for action and growth within the text. They note, “one of the first things an author does is to figure out how to get rid of the parents so that the young person is free to take credit for his or her own accomplishments” (p. 26). There are embedded values here of growing self sufficiency, independence, and a celebration of individuality.
A second characteristic identified by Nilsen and Donelson (2001) relates to an optimistic tone in the texts, and overall worth of the characters. They identify an interesting technique used to achieve this effect in young adult literature: “Ensuring that teenage characters are as smart as, or smarter than, their parents is only one of the devices that authors use to appeal to young readers” (p. 31). There is an implied latitude in parent/child relationships, with the young adult free to position himself as wiser and more accomplished than others, even a parent. How would these characteristics be positioned with cultures that favor deference to the group over the individual, or advocate strict codes of respect for elders? Again, I suggest that there are implicit, unidentified values which are embedded in the text.

A second example can be drawn from the respected *Children’s Literature in the Elementary School* by Huck, Hepler, Hickman, and Kiefer (2001). The authors reflect a high degree of cultural sensitivity throughout the text, and go to great lengths to situate U.S. children’s literature within both a contemporary and an historical context. However, certain embedded values still emerge unidentified in a strictly national context. For example, they offer that “Literature develops children’s imagination and helps them consider people, experiences, or ideas in new ways” (p. 7). The embedded values here address freedom of thought, progressive social attitudes, and human growth, perhaps related to the humanistic orientation noted earlier by Stephens (1996). Similarly, they praise the connections between literature and critical thinking, noting that “calls for reform in education have stressed the need for children to become better critical thinkers and problem solvers” (p. 12).
Do the embedded values noted above attempt to describe national cultural values? As perhaps Huck, Hepler, Hickman, and Kiefer’s (2001) last comment suggests, they may very well reflect values common to scholars and advocates in the educational community of the United States. How widely are those values shared in a broader, national context? Are different values extant, but not addressed? Bruner (1996) eloquently makes the connections between education, culture, and development of self in community, plus numerous other scholars explore the deep cultural and social connections to education itself (Friere, 1970; Ladson-Billings, 1994). But, I argue that the scholarship in children’s literature has not risen to the challenge from a distinctly contemporary, holistic United States perspective. It would undoubtedly be a highly contentious and potentially balkanizing debate, but one that could shed considerable light on a national character that has gone somewhat unexplored in this context.

I have demonstrated above that the lens of children’s literature has been used productively to explore development and expression of national identity, most clearly seen in an historical context. The specific cases of the U.S. and Australia each reflect differing states of academic dialogue on the issue, providing both context and opportunity that my study will exploit. The above scholars tend to approach the issue of cultural representation from national and postcolonial perspectives, often framing the issue through the focus of a single or bicultural perspective. Other scholars expand the context to a third dimension, looking more broadly across national boundaries and multiple cultures. Now that the layer of national context has been established, I will add that third
dimension to children’s literature and explore scholarship addressing it from a global, transnational context.

**International, Transcultural Context of Children’s Literature**

Pratt and Beaty (1999) support the distinction between a national, multicultural context and a larger international, or transcultural one. They recognize the importance of the reader’s geographic and cultural perspective to make the distinction: “A book about Native Americans read by a child whose home is in the United states we regard as **multicultural**, whereas a book about China read by that same child we designated as **transcultural**” (p. 2). They offer three benefits of addressing the transcultural perspective. First, it “builds on and extends the multicultural view that many children in the United States internalize” (p. 4). This broadens the context beyond national boundaries, helping to support the objectives of global education. Second, they draw attention to the problematic assumption that ethnic heritage or birthright lends cultural familiarity. The transcultural concept takes into consideration complex cultural affiliations and may depict more accurately the dynamics of, for example, second generation immigrants exploring cultural roots overseas. Third, they argue that “transcultural children’s literature has been largely overlooked as a subject of research for its own sake and as a tool for teaching and learning” (p. 5). Identifying it as a separate body of literature will help draw attention to its unique properties, encouraging both scholarship and use in the classroom.
To guide cultural exploration with transcultural children’s literature, Pratt and Beaty (1999) “devised a paradigm consisting of four elements that are inherent in virtually every culture: (a) geographic location, (b) economic system, (c) social system, and (d) political system” (p. 6). They then use the paradigm to review a range of texts from key geographic areas that they view as transcultural. A “story review chart” is used for each text that identities “which aspects of the story (setting, plot/events, characters, and theme) are most important or well developed” (p. 16).

Freeman and Lehman (2001) see similar advantages of an undervalued literature. Active scholars of international children’s literature and co-editors of the International Board of Books for Young People (IBBY) journal “Bookbird” with Patricia Scharer, they agree with Pratt and Beaty (1999) on the need for more scholarship: “As we discussed and interacted with colleagues, we came to realize the paucity of professional material in the area of international children’s literature” (p. vii). Their recent text, *Global Perspectives in Children’s Literature*, helps address that need and “provides a description, rationale, critical examination, and classroom uses of global children’s books” (p. vii). Their use of the term global, at times interchangeable with international, is fairly compatible with Pratt and Beaty’s transcultural, but places keen focus on authorship and availability. (I elaborate on their selection criteria in my next chapter on methodology; for now I wish to focus on their larger organizing concepts in relationship to other scholars.)

Freeman and Lehman (2001) go into greater depth than Pratt and Beaty (1999) on issues such as authenticity, translation, production, and distribution. Also, they provide a
more comprehensive overview of the state of children’s literature globally, including recent trends. They note that “areas such as Africa, Latin America, and Asia are endeavoring now to produce more indigenous literature for children, but often just a few countries in each area have a relatively viable publishing presence” (p. 3). Even when such literature is produced and made available, they find that in many regions didacticism is commonplace, with children’s literature used as a tool for moral and political education. Freeman and Lehman also attend more to the dynamics of children’s literature in other countries, and thus its role outside of the U.S. Their review supports my assertions made earlier about the dynamic interplay between children’s literature, culture, and national identity: “countries use children’s literature to promote cultural or national identity and patriotism—for example, Vietnam, Malaysia, and New Zealand—and even for some European cultures, typified by a resurgence of children’s books written in traditional Welsh and Irish languages” (p. 5).

Whereas Pratt and Beaty’s (1999) approach might be considered more of a text-centered, ethnographic model, Freeman and Lehman’s (2001) approach addresses the works as literature, leaving room for reader response and the aesthetic aspects that accompany their interactions with the reader. They provide examples of how a close reading of text and pictures, plus analysis of literary elements, reveals cultural information; themes studies are offered as an avenue for in depth exploration of a common concern from multiple perspectives. Finally, they make a special case for poetry’s use of language and symbolism, noting that “despite its special challenges for transcending borders, poetry is a vital component of global children’s literature” (p. 83).
A third major professional/theoretical work to review children’s literature in the international, transcultural context is offered by Jobe (1993). Overall, he suggests reading first to enjoy the text, but then “also read with a cultural perspective in mind” (p. 8). Seeing cultural exploration as beginning first with self examination, he then extends the scope to the “echoes of the past” and addresses the value of time travel and historical fiction. Four themes are offered as sample strategies for connecting texts; cultural authenticity is addressed creatively through the student-friendly idea of “cross cultural-checks” with a series of guiding questions.

Jobe’s (1993) advocacy for reading with attention to culture supports calls from others who suggest that we read “multiculturally” (Cai, 1998; Hade, 1997). Part of that process is recognizing the various ways in which people and cultural groups are represented in children’s literature. Through efforts to identify and categorize how parallel cultures in the U.S. were represented, Bishop (1993) developed three categories for consideration. The most detailed are termed culturally specific books. This type might include “language styles and patterns, religious beliefs and practices, musical preferences, family configurations and relationships, social mores, and numerous other behaviors, attitudes and values shared by the members of a cultural group” (p. 44). A second type of book is classed as culturally generic. These books often address common themes or supposedly “universal” experiences, but “contain few, if any, specific details that might define those characters culturally” (p. 45). A third type is labeled culturally neutral. They may depict characters or settings of particular cultures, “but are fundamentally about something else” (p. 46).
Other scholars offer additional strategies and resources for cultural exploration. Rochman (1993) takes a thematic approach and frames cross cultural exploration in the context of universals that impact the human experience such as immigration, friendship, heroism, family matters, and finding love. Stan (2002) offers the metaphor of books as bridges: “They work in two ways: to bring others to us, and to take us to other places” (p. 27). Stan builds on the earlier work by Tomlinson (1998) and provides an annotated bibliography of over 700 books from around the world, as well as lists of international award winners and other resources.

The above work offers models and guides for analysis of transcultural literature, and its use with children. Have empirically-based studies been done that examine its effects in practice? Desai (1997) reviews the current research on the use of children’s literature across cultures. Desai cites Norton (1985) who claims the benefits are “so powerful and persuasive that they are beyond dispute and that they not only shape attitudes but also stimulate children’s language and cognitive development” (p. 165). Despite such strong statements, Desai concludes:

while…experts suggest that children’s literature allows our students to vicariously experience their own culture as well as that of others and to learn about the similarities and differences among the peoples who comprise our world, the research to support this view is just now slowly beginning to emerge. (p. 166)

One of the more powerful and intriguing examples of that emerging work is by Cotton (2000), noted below.

A rare empirical study of cross-cultural understanding and children’s literature is Cotton’s (2000) work to develop and implement the European Picture Book Collection (EPBC). Cotton’s project was a response to the changing state of political affairs in
Europe: “As we move towards a more integrated Europe all children within the European Community need to develop some awareness and understanding of their European neighbors” (p. 1). The result was a unique collection of 19 picture books representative of each of the EU member countries. Adopting friendship as one universal theme for the collection, Cotton’s work demonstrated that “while there are undeniable cultural differences among the member states, it is the similarities which these picture books reflect that will help children begin to see themselves as Europeans” (p. 133). Overall, the project demonstrated the powerful role that children’s literature (notably picture books) can play in facilitating a “European dimension” in children’s education while at the same time teaching language and literature in the primary school curriculum.

Having representative books from each EU country was seen as helping children experience and appreciate narrative structure in different cultural contexts, again stressing commonalities among EU countries. Cotton (2000) viewed this as leading to “a sympathetic view of the countries and a shift away from xenophobia and toward harmony. Differences highlighted in the books can help children appreciate the many ways of living, and that each individual country has its own language and culture which enriches the lives of those who are a part of it” (p. 135). Methodological strengths of Cotton’s work include the wide-reaching support she garnered from member nations, rigorous visual and textual analysis of each book, and extensive field testing of the collection.

Each of the theoreticians/practitioners I reviewed had his/her own strategy for cultural exploration, expressing the values of respect for the diversity of global literature,
as well as the benefits of finding common connections. Although Cotton (2000) stressed the importance of finding similarities, Jobe (1993) is most vocal and definitive on the issue by clearly stating his underlying philosophy: “A major part of any approach to literature or indeed multiculturalism should be to place greater emphasis on the commonalities and similarities among peoples rather than on their differences” (p. 33). I am intrigued by Jobe’s strong preference for finding commonalities. But, I also see some challenges when that view is matched with other theoretical models of intercultural development that emerge from work in intercultural training and international education. Extending the context of my study to the next dimension—the experiential dimension through international education—will help illustrate some of those issues. I begin with a definition of both global and international education. At times these terms may be used interchangeably, but they each have distinct meanings in academia.

**Defining Global and International Education**

Merryfield (1997) traces the key contributors to global education and argues that “Robert Hanvey’s (1975) *An Attainable Global Perspective* has probably influenced the global education movement more than any other one document” (p. 3). Hanvey (1975) identifies five dimensions of a global perspective: perspective consciousness, state of the planet awareness, cross-cultural awareness, knowledge of global dynamics, and awareness of human choices. Over the years, scholars have debated the relative weight and importance of the various elements of a global education, each offering his or her own framework. Pike (2000) describes a lack of universal understanding of global
education and suggests that interpretations range from a simple geographic broadening of the curriculum to “a fundamental reevaluation of the content, organization, and purpose of schooling in line with a transformative vision of education in a planetary context” (p. 64).

In particular, it is this notion of “awareness versus action” that seems to be interpreted differently among advocates of global education. Pike (2000) argues: “Hanvey emphasizes awareness raising, rather than decision making or action. His acknowledgement of the controversy that inevitably surrounds major global issues is limited, and he avoids moral or ethical judgment with regard to global trends and conditions” (p. 66). Hanvey’s view seems to be held by many American practitioners where “knowledge of the world and its people is a primary goal for students. Controversial issues tend to be avoided in the classroom” (Pike, p. 66). And, it is just this lack of commitment to promoting alternative sociopolitical stances and encouraging social action that some global educators hope to address (Bigelow and Peterson, 2002; Merryfield, 2001; Pike and Selby, 1999).

Although harmony in the field is far from apparent, some similarities among global educators are clear. Pike’s (2000) research with global education scholars in the U.S., Canada, and the U.K. identifies both interdependence and the need for global and multiple perspectives as common threads. Freeman and Lehman (2001) support this assertion and note that “interdependence among peoples of the world is a key concept in global education” (p. 21). Merryfield (1995) captures the core of these shared sentiments and offers a good middle-of-the-road definition:
Global education develops the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are the basis for decision making and participation in a world characterized by cultural pluralism, interconnectedness, and international economic competition. (not numbered)

What, then, is international education?

The American Council on Education’s (2002) international policy paper Beyond September 11: A Comprehensive National Policy on International Education describes international educational as “foreign language study, opportunities to learn about cultures and global issues, international content in courses across the curriculum, study and internships abroad, scholarly exchanges, and opportunities to interact with international students” (p. 8). The U.S. Department of Education (2002) offers the following description that captures what I see as the essence of international education:

International education encompasses foreign language and cultural learning, exposure to global issues and challenges, study and internships abroad, and international exchanges of students, professionals, and ideas in the classroom, in the workplace, and in the virtual world. International education includes learning about effective education policies and practices abroad that we might adapt to improve education at home.

NAFSA: Association of International Educators (2002), the largest professional association for the field, offers a similar list of experiential activities that usually comprise international education. As a membership organization, though, it goes on to suggest that “NAFSA members share a belief that international education advances learning and scholarship, builds respect among different peoples, and encourages constructive leadership in a global community.”

Although the last point above, “global community,” leads to ideas of interconnectedness, the frameworks for international education tend to focus on
perspective sharing, gaining new experience, and skill-building—at times with a slant toward ensuring U.S. competitiveness in a world marketplace. DeWit (2002) reviews the sociopolitical context of the international education movement both in the United States and Europe to provide “the first full-scale analysis of the literature on, debates on, and experience with the internationalization of higher education” (p. xviii). He concludes that for “study abroad programs of American institutions of higher education, the driving rationale is ‘social learning’—the confrontation of students with other societies and their languages and cultures—to overcome parochialism (institutional rationale) and to maintain a dominant position as a superpower in the world by understanding other societies (national rationale)” (p. 154). While the need for social action may be embraced by many international education professionals, it does not seem to enjoy the same prominence as in the realm of global education.

Both international education and global education are interwoven in my study. With the exception of a truly “foreign” language study component, the research under discussion here encompasses all of the key elements of international education. Australian children’s literature introduces “international” content and cultural exploration, while the overseas component provides experiential opportunities for study (and teaching) abroad, as well as interaction with international students and teachers. As a more ideologically focused conception, global education helps validate the moral purpose of the enterprise, connecting this endeavor to a larger K-12 educational movement.
I turn now to a brief review of theory and practice influencing international education because this dimension addresses the more experiential aspects of my study such as pre-departure and in-country activities. I will return to global education in the final layer of context because this extends the study beyond personal enrichment to ideas of professional practice in the K-12 environment.

**Conceptualizing Intercultural Experience**

A review of the literature in international education reveals that the theoretical and practical base stems from work in experiential learning, cross-cultural (or intercultural) training and communication. Paige (1993) helps describe the state of affairs for this interdisciplinary activity:

> Intercultural education is a highly specialized form of instruction designed to prepare persons to live and work effectively in cultures other than their own. Its curricular content and instructional methodologies have developed over the years in response to the needs of learners and the demands intercultural experiences place upon them. (p. 1)

Extending the work of Hoopes and Ventura (1979), Fowler and Mumford (1995) suggest that it is important to appreciate the historical evolution of cross-cultural training as a response to the inadequacies of an academic, product-centered approach to education when it came to preparing people for effectiveness overseas. Remarking on the pervasive influence of the human relations and sensitivity training models in the 1960s, they argue that the present field of intercultural education and training has evolved to be more integrated and includes “cognitive, affective, and behavioral learning to the benefit of participants in intercultural training programs” (p. xiii).
Creativity and diversity abound in the arena of cross-cultural training, with programs tailored to individual needs and cross-cultural contexts. Fowler and Mumford (1995) admit that “there are almost as many different goals for intercultural training as there are training programs” (p. xiii). Fowler and Mumford’s *Intercultural Sourcebook: Cross-Cultural Training Methods* offers one comprehensive review of training strategies that includes examples of role plays, cultural simulators, case studies, and critical incidents; Brislin and Yoshida (1994) offer specific strategies geared to professions such as business, health, and education; Casse (1981) focuses on learning as process and offers a range of examples that stimulate thought, discussion, and reflection. In *Teaching About Culture, Ethnicity, and Diversity: Exercises and Planned Activities*, Singelis (1998) applies the ideas of cross-cultural training to a more formal educational context and offers a collection of 28 strategies for both teachers and trainers.

In addition to providing practical suggestions and models for implementing cross-cultural training initiatives, this body of literature offers a surprisingly diverse range of theoretical representations that struggles to describe, explain, predict, and guide aspects of intercultural experience. These models have informed theory and practice impacting intercultural experience, but have not been applied meaningfully to the intercultural literary experience, especially with regard to children’s and young adult literature. I offer the following examples to help show those connections, and to lay the foundation for my own study. I begin with relatively simple models of culture shock (Weaver, 1993), then introduce a framework that identifies and contrasts key cultural values (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961). Finally, I describe the Developmental Model of
Intercultural Sensitivity (Bennett, 1993) as a more integrative approach with specific benefits for my inquiry.

Hall (1976) identifies two dimensions of culture: internal and external. To help visualize the interplay between the two, Weaver (1993) extends Freud’s iceberg analogy of the conscious/subconscious mind to describe culture. Weaver suggests that “by far the most significant part...is unconscious or below the water level of awareness and includes values and thought patterns” (p. 157). His analogy helps visualize culture shock, and the dynamics of intercultural interaction: “When one enters another culture, it is somewhat like two icebergs colliding—the real clash occurs beneath the water where values and thought patterns conflict” (p. 159).

Figure 2: Iceberg Analogy of Internal and External Culture
The dynamics of intercultural reading are, perhaps, more complex than individual experience due to the author’s mediation. Among other things, authors can orchestrate intercultural interaction, influence behaviors, ascribe values and beliefs to characters, and present internal dialogue that may reflect—or attempt to reflect—internal culture. However, the iceberg analogy is a good starting point that forces us to consider underlying beliefs that may not be readily seen.

Anthropologists and intercultural researchers, among others, have devoted considerable energies to help define and map those hidden aspects of culture—Hall’s (1976) “internal” culture. Contrast-culture models help identify similarities and differences, drawing attention to key underlying values that differ among cultures. Weaver (1993) acknowledges that this approach may be criticized as fostering stereotypes, but argues that it can still provide “a solid conceptual framework which focuses on values and thought patterns as the determinants of behavior” (p. 161). The contrast-culture framework developed through the research of Florence and Clyde Kluckhohn, and Frederick Strodtbeck (1961) offers a useful matrix of factors to consider:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORIENTATION</th>
<th>RANGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human Nature</td>
<td>Basically Evil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mixture of Good and Evil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Basically Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mutable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Immutable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship to Nature</td>
<td>Subjugation to Nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Harmony with Nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mastery over Nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of Time</td>
<td>Past Oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Present-Oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Future-Oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Expressive/Emotional)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being-in-Becoming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Inner Development)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Doing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Action-oriented)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Relationships</td>
<td>Linearity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Authoritarian)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collaterality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Collective Decisions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individualism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Equal Rights)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3: Kluckhohn Model**


The five key value orientations identified by the model—and the range of responses expressed by differing belief systems—offer one window into the complexities of human ways of thinking, feeling, and acting in the world that we collectively group as “culture.” A strength of their model is that it invites questions to be asked across cultures, regardless of their apparent dissimilarity, to illuminate underlying assumptions and beliefs.

Theoretical frameworks such as the Kluckhohn Model can help meet the goals of reading culturally noted earlier (Cai, 1998; Hade, 1997; Jobe, 1993). Its application for literature is particularly interesting in that it offers insight into underlying mechanisms that may influence our interpretations of character and plot development, in particular. I applied the Kluckhohn Model to an analysis of Farmer’s (1996) *A Girl Named Disaster* and found that it helped me as a “Western” reader appreciate, rather than reject, Nhamo’s spiritual way of relating to the world. The Kluckhohn Model suggests an alternative to
the western view that favors science and mastery over nature, thus making cultural space for an alternative way of being.

Similarly, Beach (1993) sees reading as one form of ethnographic exploration. He offers, “responding to literature ultimately brings out differences in cultural attitudes…By making explicit the value assumptions associated with these oppositions, teachers can demonstrate the very process of self-reflective analysis of responses as a cultural activity they seek to foster in students” (p. 148). Examples such as the Kluckhohn Model can help uncover those assumptions and enrich our literary experience, thus supporting Beach’s argument.

In a framework complementary to the Kluckhohn Model, Stewart (1972) offers a fairly detailed analysis of the patterns usually attributed to “American” culture. Although such frameworks seem to belie the inherent diversity within the U.S., as well as differences among individuals of the same group, intercultural researchers such as Stewart (1972), Singer (1998), and Kohls (2001) make the case for a degree of similarity that cuts across some, if not all, subcultures within a society such as the U.S. Efforts such as these can contribute to a discourse on national identity, suggested earlier as a conversation still lacking from a perspective of children’s literature in the United States.

The above models provide insight and a host of strategies for cultural exploration, offering diverse intercultural learning goals, trainer perspectives, and applications. As I expanded the focus from theory to practice in international education, I found that this diversity of perspective and application causes challenges from a research perspective: researchers often use different terminology and choose to measure different constructs.
Terms used by researchers assessing international educational programs run the gamut from world mindedness (Hensley & Snell, 1979), self-knowledge and cognitive awareness (Vendley, 1998), to a range of dichotomies such as fear/openness and naivety/cross-cultural understanding (McCabe, 1994). Other constructs include commitment to peace, interest in transnational affairs, degree of international understanding, and empathy for other viewpoints (Lambert, 1989). Thus, diversity within the field makes cross-comparisons difficult.

In addition, many theoretical models I reviewed do not adequately account for individual differences in the way people perceived and responded to intercultural experience, or their changes in response through time and experience. In a literary context, I compare this to the difference between teaching new ways to read a text versus understanding and contextualizing the ways in which the reader already reads a text. In the next section, I introduce a framework that has been growing in popularity within intercultural research, offering a useful developmental perspective for intercultural training, as well as providing common ground for comparisons across studies.

**The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS)**

Bennett’s (1993) DMIS builds from other work in intercultural training to provide a new approach with several distinct advantages. First, it stems from the need for a “straightforward developmental model that can guide the sequencing of concepts and techniques to match some typical progression of development in learners” (p. 22). A sequenced framework takes otherwise disjointed and unrelated events and places them
within a larger, more coherent context. This contextualization addresses a weakness noted by some reviews of research in international education (Lambert, 1989; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).

Second, the model has diagnostic applications by seeking to unveil underlying assumptions and to delineate stages. Bennett (1993) argues that it “will allow trainers and educators to diagnose stages of development for individuals or groups, to develop curriculum relevant to particular stages, and to sequence activities in ways that facilitate development toward more sensitive stages” (p. 24). I suggest that this diagnostic quality is exactly what is needed when attempting to facilitate intercultural experience, and to assess change as a result of that experience. From a reader response perspective, it may suggest ways to place an individual reader’s response to intercultural literature within a spectrum of responses, each reflecting various developmental stages.

And finally, Bennett’s (1993) model is grounded in the constructivist paradigm and seeks to illuminate the phenomenon of culture by placing it in a non-judgmental context. This reflects my own view of culture, and cultural difference, by rejecting a product-centered approach that the positivist paradigm might suggest. Culture, and the perception of cultural difference, it is a construction from and through experience. Bennett explains:

This experience is termed “intercultural sensitivity,” and it is assumed that such sensitivity can be described in developmental terms better than as a collection of specific behaviors. In other words, it is the construction of reality as increasingly capable of accommodating cultural difference that constitutes development; behaviors such as negative stereotyping will be treated as simply manifestations of a certain stage of construction (p. 24).
Thus, I see Bennett’s model as a richer theoretical interpretation of the lived experience that goes beyond mere cataloging and classification of attitudinal and behavioral measures. Here’s how it works.

Bennett (1993) defines a six stage progressive model moving from three ethnocentric stages to three ethnorelative stages, each with various sub-stages, as follows:
ETNOCENTRIC STAGES:

1. **Denial**  
   Isolation: No awareness of or contact with difference  
   Separation: Intentional segregation from difference; erecting barriers

2. **Defense**  
   Denigration: Negative stereotyping, hostility toward others  
   Superiority: Positive evaluation of own group over other group  
   Reversal: Asserting superiority of an outside group over own group

3. **Minimization**  
   Physical Universalism: Physical similarities dictate similarity of culture  
   Transcendent Universalism: Humanity is “one”

ETNORELATIVE STAGES:

4. **Acceptance**  
   Respect for Behavioral Differences  
   Respect for Value Difference

5. **Adaptation**  
   Empathy: Ability to imagine/comprehend another’s perspective  
   Pluralism: Cultures are viable, different constructed wholes

6. **Integration**  
   Contextual Evaluation: Ability to evaluate/analyze situation from more than one context  
   Constructive Marginality: Metacognitive awareness of self creating own reality

**Figure 4: Overview of Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity**

Furthermore, his model is based on three key assumptions: First, that “people in similar circumstances of sojourning or other cross-cultural contact behave differently, depending on their construing of events” (p. 66); Second, that “the construing of difference necessary for intercultural sensitivity is that of ethnorelativism, whereby different cultures are perceived as variable and viable constructions of reality” (p. 66); Third, that “ethical behavior must be chosen with awareness that different viable actions are possible” (p. 66).
And finally, Bennett (1993) designed the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) to measure an individual’s perception of difference along each of the 6 scales noted above. The IDI can be administered in less than thirty minutes, thus providing a tangible measure lending useful information for individual studies, as well as allowing comparisons to be made across studies using the DMIS and the IDI. Trustworthiness of the IDI has been demonstrated through a recent study with 378 participants, concluding that “the IDI is a reliable measure that has little or no social desirability bias and reasonably, although not exactly, approximates the developmental model of intercultural sensitivity” (Paige, Jacobs-Cassuto, Yershova, & DeJaeghere, 2003, p. 467).

I see the DMIS as one touchstone through which cultural understanding—in Bennett’s terms, a measure of intercultural sensitivity—can be explored throughout this study as we examine concepts of self and other, identification of similarities and differences, and the implicit meanings this brings to the cross-cultural experience. Moreover, I see the opportunity to apply the DMIS to enrich understanding of reader response with transcultural children’s literature, thus testing a new application of Bennett’s model.

What have other studies using the DMIS and IDI found? I begin first with a review of study abroad generally, then discuss studies that have included the DMIS and IDI as measures.
Assessing Impact of International Education

Lambert (1989), offers one of the more comprehensive reviews of international education at the undergraduate level, although his study is becoming dated and needs updating. Lambert notes that benefits to students are often in the form of characterological and attitudinal growth; determining factors were seen as the degree of cultural contrast between the sojourner and host culture, length of stay overseas, and the extent of contact with host culture (p. 36).

In another wide review of the effects of study abroad, Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) discuss the issue in the larger context of undergraduate higher education as a whole. As with other factors influencing student success in college, they found that “much depends on the quality of the student’s effort in making use of the range of learning opportunities provided by the institution” (p. 110). This relates to Astin’s (1993) findings noting the importance of involvement measures: the degree to which students interact with other students, faculty, campus resources, etc., is one of the most consistent variables influencing student learning outcomes. U.S. sponsored overseas programs often foster such measures through small class sizes, low student-faculty ratios, emphasis on field experiences, and personal attention. Beyond these generalities, Pascarella and Terenzini were less affirming in their claims for overall effects of study abroad than Lambert (1989), concluding that studies “are often inconsistent in their findings, although one reasonably consistent thread indicates that study abroad produces only limited gains in students’ ‘worldmindedness’” (p. 306).
One of the more recent, and interesting, empirical studies is McCabe’s (1994) work that examined the impact that a fifteen-week Semester at Sea program had on the global perspective of 23 undergraduate students. He identified five dimensions of a global perspective: 1) fear versus openness; 2) people are same or different versus same and different; 3) naïveté versus cross-cultural knowledge/understanding; 4) view of anti-Americanism evolving from an either/or to a both/and stance; 5) ethnocentrism versus globalcentrism. Although small, a net positive change was noted for all dimensions as follows.

For the first dimension, McCabe (1994) found that “for all students the degree of openness increased as the voyage progressed; they became more accommodating to a variety of experiences” (pp. 278-279). In the second dimension, more students recognized both similarities and differences between cultures by the end of the voyage. Contact with locals was hypothesized as a major factor in this construct. For the third dimension, he found a movement from naïveté toward cross-cultural understanding. As for what aspects of the experience mattered, McCabe concluded that “shipboard experiences, including formal course work, informal socialization processes, and port experiences” had significant impact (p. 279). In the fourth dimension, most students viewed their sense of “Americanism” on a broader basis than before the program; student-to-student interactions were noted as the largest determinant on this scale. And on the final dimension, McCabe suggested that “all of the participants were classified as possessing a higher degree of globalcentrism at the conclusion of the voyage” (p. 280).
A second empirical study worthy of note was conducted by Vendley (1998) at Fairfield University in Connecticut that explored the impact of a multicultural, multi-ethnic program on student participants. The program began as a response to campus violence and perceived intolerance to difference/diversity on campus. Over a seven month period, participants from a variety of ethnic backgrounds engaged in a three-part program: a series of pre-departure meetings/workshops, an eight-day immersion experience in Mexico, and a series of follow-up meetings upon return to campus. Similar to McCabe’s (1994) study, Vendley sought to examine how such a program could impact students’ perception of self and others. In particular, Vendley addressed “the capacity to appreciate difference, self-knowledge, cognitive awareness, and learning modes and learning styles” (p. 238). A mixed-method approach was used and data were gathered through interviews, participant observation, and two pre/post-tests.

Like McCabe (1994), Vendley (1998) sought to identify the program elements that had the greatest impact. Noting the benefit of the intense, 24-hour-a-day group environment, she asserts that the experiential component in Mexico had the greatest impact on the students. Although all students were noted to have had a positive impact as a result of the program, Vendley argues that “the immersion phase provided a setting where non-White students felt on equal ground and, because of that, felt accepted and understood” (p. 239). Thus, it seems that traveling as a multi-ethnic group to a foreign place had a unique bonding effect on all group members. The following comment helps show how one African American student viewed the importance of the “study abroad” element to his/her experience:
Going to Oaxaca brought us together, made us rely on each other. I was still a minority, but we were all minorities. We all found things within each person to help the situation, to make us comfortable. After going on this trip, I have a different outlook on life and how I treat people as well as how I judge people. Also, after spending time with the people of Oaxaca, I realize how childish, naïve, stupid and selfish some of the attitudes toward people on this campus are (p. 239).

As for White students, Vendley attributes the change to a greater awareness of their racial identity that emerged through the cross-cultural experience.

Although my study does not enjoy the same multicultural participant profile as Vendley (1998), my program design incorporates pre-departure group meetings as a significant component and seeks to explore the impact of both pre-departure and immersion components of the experience. Also, the inclusion of indigenous children’s literature offers the opportunity to explore racial identity and critical theory. My longer period overseas (three weeks versus Vendley’s eight days) also affords me the opportunity to engage in a larger variety of field experiences with the participants. Like McCabe (1994), I hope to explore which aspects of the immersion experience have the most impact and meaning for the participants as they prepare to teach in an increasingly multicultural world.

The above studies provide programmatic details that identify which aspects of the program had impact on learning. As noted earlier, the IDI provides an assessment that can help measure overall growth in intercultural sensitivity on the DMIS. How has the IDI been applied in other research contexts and what are the potentials yet to be realized?

A recent study at Miami University (Klak & Martin, 2003) sought to explore whether a major campus-wide initiative celebrating Latin American cultures actually promoted greater intercultural sensitivity. They used the IDI as a pre- and post-test
measure, finding a small positive change in the direction of “greater openness to other cultures” (p. 445). Overall, they concluded that “the most notable shift was toward greater engagement with and acceptance of culture difference” (p. 445).

Klak and Martin’s (2003) study is a interesting application of the DMIS and IDI by offering a quantitative assessment of a campus-wide initiative. As Greenholtz (2000) notes below, the objective measurements provided by the DMIS and IDI are a key benefit, providing an assessment that had been missing in the field of cross-cultural education:

The dimension of cultural sensitivity has long been recognized as playing a vital role in the success or failure of cross-cultural endeavors. However, objective, empirical tools for assessing cultural sensitivity and operationalizing this crucial predictor of success for people engaged in crossing borders to provide or receive educational programming were not available. (p. 416)

Van Hook (2000) extends Greenholtz’s (2000) more general argument and discusses the potential of the DMIS for teacher educators. Van Hook suggests that “one role of teacher educators may be to facilitate the development of greater intercultural sensitivity among preservice teachers. Teachers need to carefully examine their world view to determine whether or not unintentional and subtle biases are promoted” (¶1). Van Hook comes to the same conclusion that I did in conducting my literature review: Tremendous need is clear, yet potentialities have yet to be realized or documented. Van Hook concludes that “although there has been minimal research conducted on how to alter teachers’ attitudes and behaviors toward minority groups, the DMIS provides a developmental model that, along with the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI)—a
self-assessment tool—may be used with preservice teachers to assess the effectiveness of course content and methodology” (¶1).

I see my study as helping move one step further in exploring the potentials of the DMIS with pre-service teachers. Although I planned to administer the IDI as a pre- and post-test assessment like several of the studies noted above, my primary use of the instrument would not be as a simple outcome measure. Rather, I sought a new application of the IDI and DMIS by using it as a framework to contextualize participant response to both literature and experience. As Van Hook (2000) notes above, this application can provide insight into methodology and the dynamics of using cross-cultural literature in the classroom. The DMIS is a broad theoretical construct that informs the interpretation of intercultural sensitivity in my study; the IDI scores are used to describe a group profile that is then compared to other, more traditional forms of response shared in journal comments, class discussions, on site visits, and through informal conversations.

This discussion of new applications and potentials for the future is a natural bridge to the third and final tier of context for my study. This last layer builds on the prior two, extending the literary and lived experience into expectations for future as the participants prepare for a career as teachers in an increasingly multicultural world.
Preparing for the Future: Pre-service Teacher Education

In *Multicultural and Global/International Education: Guidelines for Programs in Teacher Education*, McFadden, Merryfield, and Barron (1997) offer three considerations for teacher educators. They suggest that teachers need global knowledge at both a general and content-specific level; real and simulated cross-cultural experiences are a significant part of international and global education; and teacher educators need to model pedagogy that support the goals and values of global/international education. This latter category recommends increasing teachers’ self-knowledge, cross-cultural experiences, cross-cultural skills, perspective consciousness, values analysis, and authentic learning (p. 11). These recommendations are reflected in my course and research program design, serving as touchstones throughout the range of experiences and influencing response to literature as well as class discussions.

Two recent Ohio State dissertations explore the connections between international experience and global education. Hutchins (1996) addressed participants of short term study tours, finding changes in “their professional growth and personal development in the themes of international, global and intercultural perspectives” (p. iii). Hutchins research supports Wilson’s (1984) argument for specific benefits to teachers from short-term overseas experiences: “Teachers who have been short term international sojourners teach more accurately, authoritatively, creatively, and enthusiastically and with more understanding about the places they have visited” (from Hutchins, p. 58).

Myers (2001) specifically explored the impact of international experience on teaching with a global perspective. Myers’ sample examined former Peace Corps
Volunteers and found that participants saw personal change as the greatest impact of the experience; changes in instructional practice and approach were related, although seen perhaps as a secondary outcome. Myers identified four themes, or categories, within global education that appear to be reinforced by the overseas experience: cross-cultural awareness, tolerance, interdependence, and diversity. These findings are consistent with the guidelines noted above by McFadden, Merryfield, & Barron (1997), particularly as to the goals and values expressed by global education.

My study is informed by the work of prior scholars in both global and multicultural education who argue for the critical need to understand culture and its dynamic influence on the K-12 educational equation (Bruner, 1996; Diamond & Moore, 1995; Harris, 1993; Rogers & Soter, 1997; Webster, 2002), and also by those who identify dominant social, cultural, and economic frameworks as ongoing mechanisms of oppression and inequity (Freire, 2000; Haskins, 1998; Kozol, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Merryfield, 2000; Upchurch, 1996). Although strong connections between global and multicultural education have been argued (McFadden, Merryfield, and Barron, 1997), little effort has been made to demonstrate the theoretical and practical connections between global education and children’s literature. Despite the powerful arguments noted earlier in this chapter illustrating the frenetic multicultural repartee within children’s literature—often stemming from issues of authorship and authenticity—that level of dialogue and scholarship has not extended to touch the heart of global education. It is that final step, those final connections between children’s literature, multicultural, international, and global education that I hope to make through this study.
In their concluding comments, McFadden, Merryfield, and Barron (1997) outline a list of recommendations for teacher educators to help further the goals of global education with pre-service teachers. Their recommendations are theoretically driven by the tenets of global education, yet practically oriented. In a field ripe with debate such as global education, I suggest that the practical, tangible qualities of their recommendations provide an ideal framework through which to explore the utility of children’s literature.

They argue for teacher educators to:

1. Prepare teachers to teach deep culture and value diversity locally and globally.
2. Help teachers become aware of themselves as cultural beings, and become aware of their own culture.
3. Help teachers understand why inequities exist in education and appreciate movements for equity and excellence in local, national, and global educational contexts.
4. Provide teachers with cross-cultural experiences and reflections
5. Recognize that multicultural and global and international education involve an ongoing learning process.
6. Help teachers understand multicultural education and global and international education as separate fields of study and help teachers make connections across the fields.
7. Work with colleagues across the fields of multicultural education and global and international education. (pp. 16-17)

Can the study of transcultural children’s literature coupled with international experience help reach these goals? The next chapter describes exactly how I prepared to make that very case.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Conceptual Framework: A Rationale for Qualitative Methodology

Throughout this discussion, I have described a program, and research endeavor, that seeks to explore both the literary and lived experiences of the participants as it is experienced. Rather than study Australian literature as an isolated entity in, for example, a laboratory or a secluded library, I seek to explore its meanings in an actual, working context. As Denzin and Lincoln (2000) suggest, this context-dependant strategy calls for a qualitative approach that views research as “a situated activity that locates the observer in the world” (p. 2). As qualitative researchers, then, the literature and other cultural artifacts we explore should be studied “in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p. 2). In the case of a cross-cultural study such as this, “natural settings” include studying literature both in and outside of its context of origin.

The three week immersion experience overseas fosters an integrated, living-learning environment well-suited to the participant observer model. Following Marshall and Rossman (1995), this design affords “Immersion in the setting [and] allows the researcher to hear, see, and begin to experience reality as the participants do” (p. 79).
However, I am also sensitive to the challenges of detached objectivity implied by this traditional ethnographic term. As a human engaged in a social world with my participants, there is an element of intersubjectivity where I am both influencing and at the same time influenced by all aspects of the program (Glesne, 1999). Thus, the term observation of participation is, perhaps, more descriptive of my expected engagement (Tedlock, 2000).

My paradigmatic stance that favors a qualitative approach goes well beyond the situatedness of this study. It speaks to the very heart of how I as an individual, and researcher, view the world and the claims I hope to make about it. Ontologically, I seek to explore and attempt to understand the active role the observer, and observed, play in interpreting the world around us and, in so doing, create meaning. I embrace a stance of philosophical hermeneutics that claims “understanding is not, in the first instance, a procedure- or rule-governed undertaking; rather, it is a very condition of being human. Understanding is interpretation” (Schwandt, 2000, p. 194).

This view is particularly appropriate for a cross-cultural encounter—be it literature or lived experience—where each individual brings to the moment a unique set of past experiences, ideas, values, judgments, perceptions, and preconceptions. Understanding is not, then, a matter of setting aside these elements of self, but engaging with them. Schwandt (2000) suggests that “only in a dialogical encounter with what is not understood, with what is alien, with what makes a claim upon us, can we open ourselves to risking and testing our preconceptions and prejudices” (p. 195, from Bernstein, 1983). The cross-cultural experience provides just such an opportunity to
make the once familiar unfamiliar and to stimulate that dialogue. The ontological view that meaning is relative, and the epistemological view that meaning is constructed, even negotiated, through transaction, provides the second rationale for using a qualitative, constructivist approach for this study.

In the specific realm of literary studies, the paradigmatic stance described thus far is also consistent with the tenets of reader response theories. As Soter (1999) suggests, “Reader Response Theories have many different manifestations, but essentially, the text is seen to interact with the reader who brings all his/her experiences (cultural, social, cognitive, emotional, literary, linguistic) to bear in the engagement with the text” (p. 8). Given the goal of exploring both literary and lived experiences in this study, I suggest that reader response is an ideal launching point.

An early advocate of reader response theory and a transactional view of literature, Rosenblatt (1995) argued that readers “valued literature as a means of enlarging their knowledge of the world, because through literature they acquire not so much additional information as additional experience. New understanding is conveyed to them dynamically and personally. Literature provides a living through, not simply knowledge about” (p. 38). More specifically in the cross-cultural context, Beach (1993) offers that we can consider reader response as an ethnographic exploration of cultural worlds: “In responding as ethnographic exploration of either a text or an actual cultural phenomenon, a student and an ethnographer are both constructing cultural worlds” (p. 148). Exploration of individual response to texts, as well as the larger cultural worlds they may signify, is an important part of this study and serves as the first point of inquiry.
A third reason for the qualitative approach addresses methodology and how I as a researcher view my “subjects.” Sipe and Constable (1996) suggest, “In the positivist paradigm, the researcher decides in advance what is going to be done, and then implements the plan; the researched (who are subjects) do not participate in either making the plan or modifying the plan as it is being carried out” (p, 154). For this study, I find it essential to view the participants not as “subjects,” but as co-researchers who are intimately involved with every step of the research endeavor. It is essential for the participants to become actively engaged with both the literature as well as the experiential portion of the program, finding ways to engage personally and meaningfully. As noted earlier, I see the participants as active, engaged, creators of meaning. It is both logical and necessary that they become active participants throughout the study.

And finally, my third question area relates to fostering critical awareness in pre-service teachers and encouraging social change. This challenge necessitates that I go beyond the more passive interpretive/constructivist position that tends to be more relativistic, toward a more critical position which realizes that certain injustices must be identified and addressed through positive social change. Thus, a degree of critical theory is appropriate and necessary for this project. Sipe and Constable (1996) offer a brief but informative overview of critical theory that resonates with the goals of my third question area:

Critical theorists agree with interpretivists that there are multiple truths, but believe that there is one truth which undergirds all the rest, and it is not dependent on who is observing it; that truth is the reality of political and economic power. Critical theory assumes that all discourse is enmeshed in the rhetorical and political purposes of those who speak or write. The project of critical theory is to discover what is just and to take action; since knowledge is a form of power, it
can be used to change the world into a more just and equitable place for all groups of people. (pp. 158-159)

It is my hope that the participants—my co-researchers—will gain not only an appreciation for the dynamics of culture and social construction, but for the economic and political influences that impact children’s literature and its role in fostering critical awareness in the classroom, as well as positive change in the larger community.

Role of Researcher

As a participant-observer in this study, my goal was to present myself to the participants not as an expert instructor, but as a coach and co-learner in the process. Australia is a new culture of study for both my students and me. Plus, as described in chapter two, our point of inquiry is fairly unique. The territory that we all would be covering would be new in many ways, both predictable as well as unpredictable. To navigate the experience, as well as the study, I would provide the basic framework to structure the program and inquiry, but would rely on the experience itself, with input from the students, to help shape the process as we went along. I felt this approach would serve both my immediate needs as a researcher, but also model the importance of lifelong learning and professional development as an educator. My own growth and experiences would be as much a part of the story as that of the participants.

Each of us on the program would be living out the dream of traveling half way around the world, meeting new people, experiencing new things, and delving into the richness of children’s literature from another part of the world. Each has his/her own hopes, fears, and dreams. For our time together, I would be asking to share in those
dreams, weaving them into a story that blends with my own. Following is a brief introduction of how my part of that dream began.

**Background of the Study**

The present study has a history that goes back to before I even began doctoral study at The Ohio State University. From the late 1980s, I served as director of a variety of international study programs. The first seven years were spent working with international students at two non-profit agencies in Washington, D.C., and then for a private, liberal arts college in New England. The next six years I served as director of overseas study for a private, Catholic university in the Midwest. Cross-cultural learning was at the core of my work, yet the types of experiences varied to include: pre-college preparation for high school students, English as a Second Language, graduate writing seminars for international students, pre-professional and internship, and a variety of short- and long-term study abroad programs for undergraduate students. Throughout this professional experience, I was often challenged to devise ways to help students engage with, and understand, a foreign culture—often in a very short timeframe. Sometimes we seemed to succeed, other times I felt as if my students merely enjoyed a 4-6 week vacation.

During this period, I wondered if children’s literature might be one avenue not explored in my professional circles. The more I thought about it, the more reasons I saw why this medium could be effective. To suggest just a few, the medium: can be short and quick to read; combines text with visual graphics/clues of the source culture; is
highly engaging and attention grabbing; reflects a range of topics and narrative styles; captures the traditional folklore and beliefs of a culture; reflects the values an author and culture wish to instill in its youth; and provides adults with a potentially rich, child-to-child connection that harks back to one’s formative years where the self is just emerging in a strange and confusing world. There seemed to be a special, developmental connection between two cultural and linguistic neophytes: the indigenous young and the adult sojourner. These questions have haunted me throughout the past 14 years as an international educator; the possibilities were too intriguing to ignore.

Summer 2001 provided the first opportunity for me to test these emerging ideas. I conducted a pilot study with 24 undergraduate education majors attending a 4½ -week summer study abroad program in Ireland. With the support of a senior faculty member on the team, it was agreed that I could co-teach one of the courses. We modified a core course required for the education major (Teaching Reading with Children’s Literature) to make it site-specific and to include a cross-cultural component: Irish children’s literature. As part of our pre-departure exercises, students conducted a study of Irish children’s literature in the U.S. They then continued reading and exploring Irish children’s literature throughout their immersion experience overseas.

What did we find through this study? Well, it would be easier to ask what we didn’t find. It quickly become clear that Irish children’s literature in the U.S. was vastly different from Irish children’s literature in Ireland. Irish picture books in the U.S. were filled with leprechauns, four leaf clovers, thatched huts, St. Patrick, traditional folklore, and the like. In Ireland, some of these same images were still floating about, but more
contemporary and modern images were the norm. Comparing these images helped students live, feel, and see the construction of culture on both sides of the Atlantic. Culture came alive. Expectations for finding a “real” Ireland filled with quaint sheep, traditional folksong and dance faded into a realization that Irish culture is a complex blend of new and old, each voice struggling for its place in a rapidly changing modern world far more fascinating than the one-dimensional stereotypes we had expected.

Class discussions led to the politics of representation, post colonialism, the economics of children’s publishing, and the role culture plays in literacy. We explored the larger cultural values found in children’s literature and discovered first-hand a conservative side to Irish publishing for children. We attended the 12th European Conference on Reading where Irish authors expressed their frustration at writing, as they expressed it, ten to fifteen years behind the edge of young adult literature in the U.S. Children’s literature became a stage on which the drama of Irish culture unfolded. We witnessed arguments over freedom versus restraint in publishing, frustrations over teaching the canon, struggles for identity in an emerging European Union, and the dynamics of living in the wake of Imperialism. Our experiences at the conference, with the literature, and throughout the program overseas were exciting, overwhelming, confusing, and informative. And, we had only just broken the surface.

This pilot experiment went well beyond my expectations. Children’s literature was a useful, interesting, and valuable way to learn about Irish culture. In addition, tying the initiative to an undergraduate degree requirement was a strategic victory in boosting enrollment. In past years, only a handful of education majors had elected study abroad
each summer from this institution. But for summer 2001, over thirty education majors were eager to join the Ireland program. We had to turn away qualified applicants.

Beyond these successes, the program also taught me important lessons about conducting qualitative research: 24 students rapidly becomes an overwhelming data set to manage. I also learned more about myself as a researcher. As a liberal Quaker, I was frequently frustrated by the ever-present, conservative influence of Irish Catholicism. There were many, fascinating issues ripe for exploration. I was just beginning to see how complex the interplay could be among my goals as an educator/researcher, the philosophical tenor of the home institution, the student population, and the host culture overseas.

The pilot study was finished, and I had to decide on the site for my formal study. As Schwandt (1997) suggests for qualitative research design, the choice of venue is “not made on the basis of a random sampling procedure designed to yield a representative site.” Rather, the site should be chosen purposefully, with distinct criteria that stem from and support my inquiry. Schwandt recommends that “the site or place (or person) is chosen on the basis of a combination of criteria including availability, accessibility, and theoretical interest” (p. 140). As exciting as the Ireland initiative had been, when I took into account my own experience with the pilot program and reassessed my research questions, a number of factors combined to suggest Australia as a rich site for my study.

Following Schwandt’s (1997) recommendations, the choice of Australia was made for a variety of strategic reasons. First, I knew that my potential subject population would be very weak in foreign language skills. For this study, I was not attempting to
address issues of translation or foreign language study as such, so I intentionally chose a culture where English was the dominant language. As with Ireland, Australia met this first criteria. Second, I sought a country with a rich tradition of indigenous children’s literature. One of the interesting realizations of my pilot study in Ireland was the limited production of indigenous picture books. By contrast, Australia has a rich tradition with authors such as Mem Fox, Graeme Base, and Libby Gleeson, to name just a few. Thus, the literature to explore was potentially broader and more well-known. Third, through several colleagues, I had strong contacts with both schools and children’s literature resources in Australia. My initial inquiries in Australia revealed a host of children’s literature museums, collections, programs, and related activities that I did not find in Ireland. Finally, I had more personal interest in exploring the cultures of Australia rather than continuing with a study of Ireland. I was ready for a change, and a shift to the world “down under” would be part of it.

And, as I will describe shortly, the same rigor of purposeful sampling applied to my recruiting and selecting participants for this emerging endeavor.

Summer of 2002 I decided to leave the world of full-time academic administration, and was offered the opportunity to teach at a small regional campus of a major Midwestern university while completing my dissertation. That fall, I was assigned two sections of Introduction to Children’s Literature where I worked with about 45 undergraduate education majors and post-baccalaureate students preparing for the Master of Education program. At our opening session, students completed a creative writing
assignment that, among other questions, asked: If you got a free ticket to go anywhere in the world, where would you go? Almost half responded: Australia.

I was actively seeking a student population for my research. These students were motivated, engaged, and, as I now saw, interested in Australia as a destination. Also, I would have the chance to work with many of them as an instructor for two more courses during winter and spring quarters. This seemed like an ideal situation in the making.

My advisor and the dean’s office at the sponsoring institution were tremendously encouraging and supportive. All recognized that this is the kind of program our students need, particularly on regional campuses. But still, negativity hung in the air. Comments from colleagues and others included: Students can’t afford this kind of luxury. It doesn’t meet any degree requirements. Many are adult students with families and other commitments, so they can’t possibly take the time off to go. I wondered if I could even make this program work.

Despite these concerns, over a dozen teacher education students—one quarter of the students in my classes—showed considerable interest in an overseas program for the upcoming summer. The dean’s office made available travel funds of $1,000 for each student, easing the financial burden. Plus, I located an extremely competitive travel and lodging package. These factors combined to produce a relatively affordable program; the project looked feasible. So, I sought and gained official approval for the overseas study tour itself. I priced the program, then wrote a program description and student application (see Appendix A). I now entered the formal recruiting phase.
The Participants

In seeking participants, I made several strategic decisions. First, I limited my pool to students engaged in study at the regional campus. This helped satisfy the requirements for the dean’s $1,000 travel support of each participant. Plus, drawing on students from the same region had logistical benefits for scheduling our pre-departure meetings. Second, I limited the pool to students who were undergraduate education majors, or completing prerequisite courses for entry into the Master’s program in education. Had I opened the program to general liberal arts students, I would miss the professional application dimension that was part of my focus. Also, I felt that education students were most motivated to read, to critique, and to discuss application issues of children’s literature. Third, I limited the pool to pre-service teachers, thus excluding experienced teachers. I already had multiple variables in the study to address, so I sought a population that was beginning from a fairly similar level of experience with children’s literature. Veteran teachers would undoubtedly add a rich dimension to the experience, but I saw this as a separate population that would have different programmatic needs I would struggle to meet.

With these factors in mind, I distributed the program description and application to all 45 students in my fall Introduction to Children’s Literature courses. The initial interest pool of twelve resulted in six formal applicants. Based on the third criteria noted above, I rejected the application from a veteran teacher. This turned out to be a very wise decision because of overseas logistics, coupled with the pressures of competing personal agendas during such an intense experience. The five remaining applicants were above
average students, in good academic standing, wrote thoughtful essays describing why they would like to participate, appeared interested in the research dimensions of the endeavor, and were able to secure the needed financial resources to participate. I accepted all five.

In several ways, the five participants were like a majority of the teacher education students at small regional campuses like mine. They were all female, middle class, and Caucasian. Three of the five participants were what might be termed typical college-aged students (aged 21, 22, and 23), unmarried, and early childhood education majors. The other two participants were both older, married adults (aged 31 and 41, both with children), and in the middle childhood education program. All participants had spent most of their youth, and adult life, in Ohio. Three of the students hoped to attend an Ohio MEd program in the fall following their overseas experience, the other two expected to join masters programs in other states, and to teach outside of Ohio.

International experience varied for the participants. None had lived overseas for an extended period of time. Three of the participants traveled on high school trips to Europe, one traveled to China as well. Four of the participants made a number of sojourns to Canada; one went to Mexico, and one to the Virgin Islands. All participants expected to teach in the United States for their career.

Through both the program application and our informal discussions preparing for the program, I learned more about the participants, and their reasons for joining the program. Motivation varied, but a number of common themes seem to be emerging. One participant noted particular interest in the opportunity to work in Australian schools
during the program. She saw this as an opportunity to move beyond the level of tourist
toward a more meaningful interaction with the people and culture: “Instead of being an
observer, I would have the chance to be an active participant. I think that I would really
learn a lot from an experience like this. It would give me a grasp on what my chosen
profession is like in another country.”

Cultural exploration also featured in student motivation. One participant
commented, “I will be learning about another culture, their customs, and experiencing
their teaching styles. Hopefully, I can learn things in the classrooms of Australia that I’ll
be able to use on my own back home.” This student also felt that children’s literature “is
a very important part of our culture. In fact, it is almost a ‘snapshot’ of our culture. I
want to learn about the Australian culture and their views of it through their literature.”
One of the older participants took a more critical stance initially and said, “I want to see
if you can actually learn enough about a culture from reading books, subscribing to
internet news, and watching TV shows, to really get a feel for a country. I am curious as
to how accurate stereotypes of a culture really are.”

All participants made connections between their anticipated overseas experience
and their future practice as teachers. Several participants expressed interest in making
connections with Australian teachers interested in doing collaborative internet-based
projects; all were expecting to prepare teaching units on Australia to use in their
classrooms.

Despite potential similarities between my five participants and the pre-service
teacher education student population in general, there may be some notable differences.
The participants self-selected to enroll in a course that did not fulfill any degree requirements. This reflected a commitment of time and money that not everyone would be willing or able to make. They all had an interest in other cultures and gaining international experience, so much so that they were willing to leave home, family, and friends to participate in an intense, three-week trip. Thus, their motivation regarding intercultural issues and learning was relatively high. Finally, all five showed considerable interest in children’s literature itself; not all pre-service teachers share such enthusiasm.

While I acknowledge these factors as limiting generalizability, I see the group as well-suited to a study that explores the potential of intercultural pre-service education through children’s literature and international experience, thus meeting my research needs. As described above, both the site and participant selection followed Schwandt’s (1997) definition for criterion-based, purposeful sampling.

Now that the site and participants have been described, I will address the overall structure of the program, and the specific research strategies employed during each phase.

**Program Design and Rationale**

I have been describing a complex research initiative that combines literary, lived, and professional experiences in a cross-cultural context. By the very nature of this dynamic, the experiences would be wide, varied, and interrelated. Moreover, each participant would have his or her own potentially rich and personal interpretation along the way. Every twist and turn—whether in the pages of a picture book, in the winding
streets of “The Rocks” in Sydney, or in the hallways of a primary school in Melbourne—would be part of that experience.

Geertz (1983) positions qualitative research within the endeavor itself, suggesting a degree of flexibility when it comes to methodological design: “individuals thinking of themselves as social (or behavioral or human or cultural) scientists have become free to shape their work in terms of its necessities rather than according to received ideas as to what they out or ought not to be doing” (p. 21). I felt that my program design, and thus methodology, was influenced by three distinct necessities, or forces, that competed and coexisted throughout the experience. I identify one area as “research” and see this as encompassing the academic components of the program, with the study of children’s literature itself at the center. My research questions, and the point of inquiry established through the literature review in chapter two, are firmly rooted here, although they clearly overlap into the other two areas. A second area I identify as “programmatic.” These needs relate to the administrative and logistical realities I faced when conceiving and designing the program. Factors include the amount of seminar time I had with the participants, length of time away from home, available resources in the U.S. and overseas, etc. A third main area I identified as “personal.” These factors would vary for each participant—including me—but would include: the amount of intercultural experience, individual tastes and interests, learning styles, physical and emotional stamina, motivations, etc. A simple Venn diagram captures these dynamics:
To use Janesick’s (2000) term, my research design and implementation would be a “choreography” influenced by each of these three domains. I would provide a degree of structure, yet anticipate flexibility given the unknown territory we would cover. Citing Flick (1998), Janesick suggests that “good qualitative research design turns on the use of a set of procedures that are simultaneously open-ended and rigorous and that do justice to the complexity of the social setting under study” (p. 379). This was exactly my philosophy as I designed and led the study.

In the following pages, I will take you, the reader, through each phase of my study. In many ways, there are actually two, deeply intertwined stories that shaped my methodology: what I planned to do (and why), and what I actually did (and why). In telling those stories, I will try to resist actually presenting the data itself, or describing too much detail of the dynamics that caused those adjustments. The actual data, and the methodological realities that emerged, are an important part of my findings that are best
addressed in later chapters. For now, I wish to present a brief, coherent overview that will form the basis for this latter discussion.

Once the site and participant selections had been made, I conceptually divided the program and research process into three distinct phases: pre-departure seminars and related activities; three-week immersion experience in Australia; post-program debriefing and wrap-up session. The chart below helps illustrate the phases and timeframes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Pre-departure Phase</th>
<th>Immersion Phase</th>
<th>Post-program Debriefing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seminar meetings in Ohio</td>
<td>January – June</td>
<td>Trip to Australia</td>
<td>Debriefing Session in Ohio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trip to Australia</td>
<td>June 15 – July 5, 2003</td>
<td></td>
<td>August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debriefing Session in Ohio</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 6: Timetable of Study**

Each phase had its own role in the program and served multiple agendas simultaneously. The three main forces in the program noted earlier (research, program, personal) each rose to different prominence at various phases. Moreover, as I would see when actually living through the experience, each participant weighted those forces differently, and at different phases in the program. The result caused conflict among competing agendas, and a readjustment of plans to serve all members of the group. In retrospect, this is a natural outcome of a process that was introduced to the participants as collaborative and self-directed. However, this created challenges for me as master choreographer of the overall experience and study.
Before addressing specifics of each phase in detail and my actual engagement with the participants, I would like to discuss three key strategies that threaded throughout all phases of the experience. These strategies influenced my methodological decisions overall, and many of the specific steps that I made along the way. The first relates to the foundation of the study itself: children’s literature. I will offer my working definition of “Australian” children’s literature, then discuss how texts were selected for use in the study. The second strategy relates to my overall theoretical approach to reading and analyzing the children’s literature we would encounter. The third relates to my method of both response and inquiry which favored writing as a key to learning. I will present first the rationale for each of these three strategies, then discuss specific details of the program and process of engagement with the participants at each phase of the program.

Selecting the Literature

In their discussion of qualitative data management and textual analysis, Ryan and Bernard (2000) suggest that “Investigators must first identify a corpus of texts, and then select the units of analysis within the texts” (p. 780). Australian children’s literature has been positioned as the foundation of this study—and the initial focus of analysis. Thus, it is appropriate to begin with my definition of “Australian” children’s literature.
For their book *Global Perspectives in Children’s Literature*, Freeman and Lehman (2001) define international children’s literature as:

books written and published first in countries other than the United States (both in English and in translation), books written by immigrants to the United States about their home countries and published in the United States, books written by authors from countries other than the United States but originally published in the United States, and books written by American authors and published in the United States with settings in other countries. (p. 10)

This framework includes cultural insider and outsider perspectives, but excludes texts published abroad that are not available in the U.S. Freeman and Lehman’s more restrictive definition is quite appropriate for their discussion because it: 1) limits what could become an overwhelming number of obscure and niche-market books found throughout the world, and 2) reflects the lived reality of most United States teachers (and students) and what they are likely, and able, to encounter as “international” children’s literature.

For the purposes of my study, I expanded their definition to include texts published in Australia but not available in the United States. This was a conscious decision for two reasons. First, the country-specific focus of Australia provides an immediate, and dramatic, reduction in the potential number of texts to explore. This narrower focus afforded me more latitude in scope. Second, the ethnographic purpose of my study included the goal of comparing Australian children’s literature in *Australia* to that which is available in the United States. Unlike teachers who never leave the U.S., the participants in my study would be in direct contact with indigenous Australian literature throughout their experience. As Freeman and Lehman (2001) observe: “Even books originally published abroad will likely undergo changes, such as altering the size to
fit American presses or the content and illustrations to make them more suitable for American audiences and less culturally specific” (p. 10). When possible, these were exactly the kind of nuances and cultural sensitivities that we hoped to explore.

As for what constitutes children’s literature, I defined it broadly to include picture books, chapter books, and, to a lesser extent, young adult novels. This age range is appropriate for the participants’ future work in the classroom in that three will be teaching Pre-K through third grade, and the other two teaching middle school. It is important to note that greater emphasis was placed on picture books for two strategic reasons. First, time constraints meant that we could review far more picture books than novels. Second, as noted earlier, I wished to take advantage of the visual clues to culture that picture books offered.

Given these definitions, which texts did we read? The initial phase of the project examined the set of Australian children’s literature available in regional Ohio public libraries. In most cases, the participants were able to review virtually all texts identified as “Australian” by author, setting, or content in a particular library.

In the next phase of the project where participants were reading texts imported from Australia, selection became more of an issue. As program leader, I ordered texts over the internet from booksellers in Australia as well as purchased dozens on a two week visit to Australia in March 2003. As one limiting factor, I decided to collect books that were currently in publication and readily available at local bookstores in Australia. This excluded many historical texts such as those available through the Children’s Literature Research Collection at the State Library of Victoria. As part of our immersion

85
experience, I had scheduled a lecture by the curator of this collection to explain some of
the historical trends in Australian children’s literature, but I excluded these texts from our
core readings for two reasons. First, this would expand the number of texts exponentially
and make the project unmanageable. Second, I question the degree to which cultural
outsiders could identify and understand—as individual readers—the myriad subtleties
and cultural markers that would make such an historical study worthy.

Thus, this project took a decidedly contemporary snapshot at one moment in time
of the world of Australian children’s literature. Aside from a logistical necessity, this
view was also appropriate from a theoretical perspective in that it mimics the realities of
children’s literature in the classroom. As teachers, we are always teaching from a limited
set of texts that we have available at any given time. Thus, it was appropriate to explore
the possibilities—and limitations—of what a given text set conveys to us about the world.
Identifying and learning to work with text sets was one goal of the project.

Within the larger world of Australian children’s literature widely available in
Australia, I identified the following criteria for selection. Texts should include both
fiction and nonfiction. Also, to the extent possible, samples should reflect a range of
genre: historical fiction, contemporary realistic fiction, fantasy, traditional stories,
biography, informational books, and poetry. Among these, I still needed to make
choices. The final task of selection was a bit easier for picture books than chapter and
young adult novels. In many cases such as in the smaller bookstores, I was able to
review (and often purchased) almost every picture book that I could identify as either
having an Australian setting, or written/illustrated by an Australian. These texts were published most often in Australia, the U.K., or the U.S.

In cases where the range was greater, and for chapter books and young adult novels, the task was much more difficult. I specifically sought expert advice on selection. I consulted with academics, teachers, students, publishing professionals, critics, authors, and academic publications including:

- Dr. John Stephens and Dr. Robyn McCallum of the children’s literature program at Macquarie University, Sydney
- Howard Mould, former classroom teacher and children’s literature professor at Deakin University
- Agnus Nieuwenhuizen, Director of the Australian Center for Youth Literature
- Australian author/illustrator Bruce Whatley
- Authors of young adult fiction who participated in a roundtable discussion sponsored by the Victoria State Library in Melbourne
- Representatives at Books Illustrated, a Melbourne children’s bookstore, gallery of children’s book illustrations, and educational center run by author/illustrator Ann James
- Representatives at Dromkeen, an internationally recognized museum and educational center for Australian children’s literature sponsored by Scholastic, Australia.
- International children’s literature guides and bibliographies by Stan (2002) and Pratt and Beaty (1999)
- Children’s Book Council of Australia recommended books and award winners; Australian Children’s Book of the Year winners.

To each of these resources, I asked and/or sought to discover: “What were Australian children reading?” to help get a sense of current tastes and trends, and “What would you recommend to help Americans get a sense of Australia through its children’s literature?” I sought specifically to represent the diversity of Australia and include texts written by Australians of European, Asian, African, and Aboriginal ancestry. Special attention was paid to including texts by Aboriginal authors—and the publications of Magabala Books, which specializes in the promotion of indigenous authors and illustrators. This focus
was included to facilitate a discussion among program participants of postcolonialism and issues surrounding the relationship between indigenous populations and European colonizers in both the U.S. and Australia.

These efforts resulted in a growing collection of picture books that I treated as a class set and shared among the participants. In addition, I identified several longer books as core class texts, and provided individual copies of most selections to each participant. Featured texts include: *Seven Little Australians* (Turner, 1894/1994), *Storm Boy* (Thiele, 1963/2002), *Looking for Alibrandi* (Marchetta, 1992), *Playing Beatie Bow* (Park, 1980), *The Binna Binna Man* (McDonald & Pryor, 1999), *My Girragundji* (McDonald & Pryor, 1998), *Two Weeks with the Queen* (Gleitzman, 1989/2002), *The Day My Bum Went Psycho* (Griffiths, 2001). A description of each text with a brief rationale is provided in Appendix B.

I envisioned selecting and reading texts as an ongoing process throughout the program. As the participants read in the U.S. and then engaged with Australians overseas, they were to continue exploring the range of available texts, to discuss with teachers and students what texts are being read and why, and to ask themselves what the texts—and experience—means to them about understanding the diverse cultures that make up Australia. As with my pilot study in Ireland, the process of selecting and discovering Australian texts was an important part of the learning process and our study’s findings that I will discuss in chapter four. My next strategy builds upon the empowerment of choice by encouraging open engagement and response to the texts we encountered.
Strategies of Response

In the previous two chapters, I established a rationale for the value of exploring an “outsider” perspective with regard to Australian children’s literature, then I described a point of inquiry that combined the literary experience with the more active, visceral experience of an exciting overseas trip. All of this was then filtered through professional expectations of working with children and applying what the participants were learning to their future roles as teacher. My project had a unique focus of cultural exploration from an outsider perspective that combined literary, lived, and professional dimensions. This focus is not necessarily represented in the professional literature, so my “orchestration” as Janesick (2000) suggests, would be somewhat unique as well.

Reader response and the construction of meaning have been presented throughout this discussion as the key dynamic I hoped to foster. As I considered how to implement this strategy, I struggled with how directive to be in our engagement with the literature. For example, one of the concerns I had with simply implementing Pratt and Beaty’s (1999) approach from the beginning was that it might be too prescriptive. Their framework for using transcultural children’s literature was centered around four key cultural paradigms: geographic, economic, social, political. Teachers, and students, could then consider these paradigms as they read literature; some texts would provide rich and interesting geographic information, others details on social dimensions of culture, still others little depth at all. This strategy provided a rating scheme and means to compare different works, but it ran the risk of turning our reading experience into a simple mining expedition. I already knew that expert ethnographers and cultural insiders would be far
better “miners” than our group of outsiders. Also, this would turn the more natural and enjoyable process of reading (the aesthetic stance) into a purely efferent one (Rosenblatt, 1995). For this project, I felt less direction was appropriate in the beginning. I would, however, introduce Pratt and Beaty, as well as other models of analysis, later in the program.

However, with no explicit direction or strategies, participant response may be very shallow, perhaps indicative of a very casual or surface read. What would we be looking for within the texts? My solution was to conceive of the reading experience as growing and evolving over the course of the project. I approached initial readings and journal assignments from a very open stance, suggesting that the group consider broad questions such as, “What does this book mean to you?” and “What do you think this tells you, as a reader, about Australia?” and, even more generally, “How do you respond to this piece? What do you think of it?” Individual response was always the starting point, when possible.

As we went along, I used class discussion as an opportunity for us to share our own views, to hear other participants’ responses, and to introduce theoretical perspectives that might enrich our understandings. For example, as discussion leader I applied a critical theory perspective to our review of nonfiction texts. This strategy raised issues of voice, representation of “other,” audience, authorial background and qualifications. Toward the end of our pre-departure phase, I provided a collection of readings that included excerpts from Pratt and Beaty’s (1999) work, general discussions of international children’s literature, as well as critical analyses of Australian children’s
literature by cultural insiders. I saw these readings as a way to bridge the group’s more individual, outsider perspectives with other, more “insider” perspectives that we were about to encounter.

I envisioned different theoretical perspectives and strategies for working with texts as adding to a literary toolbox. Each tool has a different function and benefit for exploring the texts. I will discuss key examples of this in the coming pages; for now I want to introduce a third methodological decision that helped support my efforts to encourage response, and to provide data for analysis.

**Writing: A Key to Learning**

Throughout each phase of the program, the participants engaged with a wide range of materials and experienced many thoughts, feelings, and emotions. I elected to favor writing as an instructional tool for the seminar, as well as a means of generating data for my study. Overall, I suggested that the group engage in a form of reflexive ethnography with regard to both the literature and lived experiences. As Ellis and Bochner (2000) suggest, “In reflexive ethnographies, the researcher’s personal experience becomes important primarily in how it illuminates the culture under study” (p. 740). This strategy of inquiry relies heavily on writing as it explores another culture, or subculture, and challenges the authors to “use their own experiences in the culture reflexively to bend back on self and look more deeply at self-other interactions” (p. 740).

Thus, participants were asked to read, to live, and to experience throughout the study. And in the process, they were to write and reflect on what those experiences mean.
to them. Why favor writing in this fashion? In their studies of writing as a vehicle for
teaching and learning, Langer and Applebee (1987) conclude that there is “clear evidence
that activities involving writing (any of the many activities involving writing we studied)
lead to better learning than activities involving reading and studying only. Writing assists
learning” (p. 135). However, Langer and Applebee go on to note that all writing
activities are not the same: “different kinds of writing activities lead students to focus on
different kinds of information, to think about that information in different ways, and in
turn to take quantitatively and qualitatively different kinds of knowledge away from their
writing experiences” (p. 135). What kinds of writing activities should be structured and
can they further my goals of enriching cross-cultural understanding?

In Writing Across Culture: An Introduction to Study Abroad and the Writing
Process, Wagner and Magistrale (2000) discuss writing as a vehicle for cultural
exploration, particularly in the context of international education. They see “the
analytical notebook as perhaps the single most important writing activity available to a
student studying a foreign culture” (p. xv). It is an opportunity to “discover, understand,
and preserve your intercultural experience. Better than photographs or postcards, your
own written impressions of people, events, food, and street life will serve as a more
significant record of life in a new society” (pp. 41-42). They suggest using the notebook
“to react to lectures, readings, impressions of people and places, food, customs, cultural
values, rituals, holidays, and even the weather” (p. 46). Virtually anything can be
included in these notebooks; the analytical dimension seeks to explore why certain
feelings, reactions, and attitudes might occur. It is a space to “practice expressive
writing—using language in a relaxed and informal manner—but always with the intention of eventually placing these personal experiences into a social and theoretical context” (p. 44).

To put these ideas into action, I structured a series of written assignments designed to promote reflection and analysis of both the texts and lived experiences. These responses/reflections were submitted as a core part of the seminar requirements. I also encouraged the participants to journal on personal thoughts, feelings, and reflections throughout the program. I purchased blank journals during my scouting trip to Australia and provided each participant with one. I specifically selected journals with removable pages to facilitate sharing of journal comments throughout the program. The formal assignments, along with more personal journal reflections, comprise what Wagner and Magistrale (2000) describe as the analytical notebook.

Key journal assignments for the analytical notebook were:

Phase 1: Pre-departure:

1. Pre-conceived notions of Australian culture
2. Critical review of Australian children’s literature resources available at a local U.S. library, and ideas of culture gleaned from those materials.
3. Response to selected Australian children’s literature, imported from Australia and read prior to departure.

Phase 2: Immersion:

4. Reflections on 12 key experiential components of the programs
5. Reflection on the impact of one-on-one interactions in Australia
6. At the source: reflections of Australian children’s literature in action
7. Comparison of the literary versus lived experiences of Australian culture
The first three journal assignments built upon my experience with the pilot study in Ireland and were designed to address my first research question: preconceived notions of Australian culture and those gained through reading children’s literature. The four assignments in phase two were designed to answer the second question of my study: the lived experience and its interaction with and through the literature. Appendix C includes more detailed descriptions of the journal assignments and the prompts used as guides for the participants.

And so, with the three overall strategies of selecting the literature, fostering response, and using writing as a tool for learning and responding, I led the participants through each phase of the program as follows.

**Phase One: Pre-departure**

The pre-departure phase began about four months prior to the trip and was structured around six formal group meetings: January 27, March 3, April 6, May 4, May 25, and June 2, 2003. The first two meetings were held on campus during the week, the following three were hosted on Sundays at the home of one of the participants who lived near campus. The final meeting was held as a “bon voyage” dinner at a local restaurant.

I had several distinct goals for the meetings, and the pre-departure phase overall. As with every step of the program, my goals were a blending of the three need areas noted earlier: personal, programmatic, and research. I began first by addressing core personal and programmatic needs. This relates to the NAFSA: Association of International Educators’ guidelines for professional standards in study abroad orientation.
by providing “essential practical information” (Summerfield, Silbey & Stellmaker, 1997, p. 234). This included helping three participants apply for their first passport, discussing and confirming travel plans, describing housing and meal arrangements, reviewing tour schedules and expected interactions with overseas hosts, helping students write letters of introduction to host schools. These “care and feeding” issues were, naturally, of immense importance to the participants. They arose continually, beginning with the application phase and continuing throughout the pre-departure sessions, as well as the overseas program itself. I felt it was important to provide an atmosphere of support and concern for personal welfare and anxieties about traveling overseas, so we spent as much time as necessary to address group concerns. I devoted the first two meetings to handling personal and programmatic issues, as well as getting to know one another as a group.

Spring break fell shortly after our second meeting, so I decided to use that time for the students to complete journal assignments one and two (preconceived notions of Australian culture, and an exploration of Australian children’s literature in their home library). I intentionally scheduled these assignments before our classroom discussions of culture and Australian literature because I wanted each participant to explore her own ideas without the influence of other students, or me.

With the main programmatic issues addressed in the first two meetings, I planned to begin the formal research components during our third meeting, April 6. After informal greetings and discussion, I officially asked for the students’ agreement to participate in the study by reading the “Research Overview and Request for
Participation” to the group. I then distributed the consent forms, which the participants signed and returned. Both documents are included as Appendix D and E.

Once formal written consent was given by the participants, I then administered the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) to all five participants as a pre-test. As discussed in chapter two, the IDI would provide insight into the participants’ world view and their degree of cross-cultural sensitivity, as defined by Bennett (1993), prior to the program. Also, I planned to consider the group and individual IDI profiles as a touchstone when analyzing their responses to literature, experience, and cross-cultural issues in general. The IDI took approximately twenty minutes to administer.

After everyone had completed the inventory, I collected the instrument, then began the group discussions. We started with a debriefing of the first assignment: preconceived notions of Australian culture, as well as an initial exploration of Australian children’s literature at their local library. Since the participants had already journaled on their individual ideas, I conducted the discussion as a brainstorming session to gather the entire group’s notions, and to provide an opportunity for each participant to hear and discuss the others’ perspectives. I summarized all responses on a tabletop post-it presentation pad. With the participants’ consent, I also audio taped this and the following two sessions; I had elected not to audiotape the first two administrative meetings since the discussions were not particularly relevant to my research questions.

Once our preconceived notions had been shared and recorded, I shifted the session to a broader discussion of culture and cultural exploration. I sought to meet NAFSA’s recommendation of providing motivation and support for learning about other
cultures, and helping with the overall process of crossing cultures (Summerfield, Silbey & Stellmaker, 1997, p. 234). To introduce this dimension and provide resources, I provided the participants with two books. One was Kohls’ (2001) *Survival Kit for Overseas Living*, a clearly written, easy to read text that provides basic information about culture, the phases of culture-shock, attributes of “American” culture, and strategies for interacting across cultures. I had used earlier editions of this book with study abroad students for years and found it to be quite helpful for independent study as well as common ground for discussion.

I also provided students with *Culture Shock! Australia* (Sharp, 2001). This culturally specific text provided insights into Australian social and political history, stereotypes associated with Australia, and aspects of contemporary culture including slang, food, and customs. I chose *Culture Shock! Australia* over other, more traditional guidebooks for two reasons. First, I expected students to purchase on their own and/or share among the group the typical Michelin, Fodders, and Lonely Planet guides that provide travel logistics and resources. Thus, I didn’t want to waste my resources with a book that would be redundant. Second, I felt that the *Culture Shock!* series provided more depth from an ethnographic, cross-cultural perspective than typical guidebooks. Past overseas programs I administered used *Culture Shock! Italy* (Flower & Falassi, 1994), and found it to be very helpful.

When passing out the books, I suggested to the participants that we consider both *The Survival Kit* and *Culture Shock! Australia* as references and guides. My goal was to draw on ideas raised in these texts to enrich our response to the literature. I also used the
framework of culture shock and cultural exploration to introduce to the group how I viewed qualitative research as a whole, and our project more specifically. I reiterated an ideology that was present from the very conception of the program, clarifying that I viewed the participants as co-researchers in this endeavor, not passive students in an instructor-centered, instructor-led class. Moreover, I presented myself as a co-learner to them in the process, discovering new texts and new aspects of Australian culture along with the participants. I would learn later, though, how this methodological approach had some unexpected ramifications which I will discuss in chapter five.

During this session, participants brought select books from their library exploration to share with the group. One participant brought two nonfiction texts to the meeting—Anne Sharp’s *Australia* (2003) and Kevin Davis’ *Look What Came from Australia* (1999)—that I found to be particularly interesting from the position of authorial stance and cultural representation. I used these examples to discuss different ways of reading and critiquing texts, and the application of critical theory. I describe these texts, and our discussion, more fully in chapter four; I note them here as an example of my methodology that used group sessions as a way to explore the construction of meaning by both author and reader, and the use of different theoretical lenses with the texts. I was attempting to describe and use the “literary toolbox” I hoped to create with our group.

Session three ended with the distribution of a number of children’s literature texts and the blank journals I brought back from Australia for the group. We agreed to read and journal on the three longer works, *Seven Little Australians* (Turner, 1897/1994),
Storm Boy (Thiele, 1963/2002), and My Girragundji (McDonald & Pryor, 1998) before the next session.

I learned in session three that the participants had encountered interesting, and different, books that I wanted to explore. Also, I was amassing a collection of over fifty picture books that I wanted to share with the group. However, our brief book talks did not allow me, or the students, to touch, feel, and read the text for ourselves. I felt that we needed some time together to just exchange these treasured texts, and to read. So, I elected to run session four as a picture book “read in.” I asked everyone to bring the most interesting books they had encountered to the session. For my collection, I organized them by genre and divided them into sets: nonfiction, fantasy, folklore, contemporary fiction, poetry, and miscellaneous.

By this time, the participants had already considered their preconceived notions of Australian culture, and begun reading and responding to a number of Australian children’s books on their own. I had also begun to share with the group my ideas of the “literary toolbox,” and suggested some critical perspectives to consider. At this point, I felt this was enough direction to offer the group. I wanted them to just read and respond to more literature. We devoted about two hours to the read in. I encouraged them to read through as many of the picture books as possible in our two hour period, but also to make notes in their journal about their responses.

We finished the read-in with a brief discussion. But, quite frankly, we were rather tired from reading, so our verbal exchange didn’t go terribly long or deep. We ended the session with a viewing of the recently released video Rabbit Proof Fence (Noyce &
Olsen, 2002). I had previously seen the film and felt that this intense historical drama helped illustrate the lived realities of Aboriginal children and families in Australia. Given our heavy focus on reading, I felt a brief foray into multimedia would not only present some new information to consider, but offer a common experience for the group regarding the power dynamics of colonialism. We discussed the film as a powerful visual narrative, told through the perspective of a young Aboriginal girl. Comments such as “powerful,” “intense,” “moving,” and “well done” indicated to me that the film had a strong impact on the group, and we brought up issues it raised throughout the experience overseas.

I had an unexpected family emergency in May that took me away from Ohio, so the group agreed to hold session five on their own. They used the time to continue planning for the trip, and discussing some of their readings. It was near the end of a stressful quarter, so I sensed it was a little difficult to generate a deep literary discussion. They gave me an audiotape of the session the following week.

The final session, number six, was held two weeks before departure. My main goals with this meeting were more programmatic and personal. I wanted to address any last minute questions, confirm our plans to meet at the airport, and pass out the final itinerary for the group. From a research perspective, I hoped to collect the journal responses that the students had been making throughout the last two months. In my e-mail confirming the meeting, I reminded everyone to bring copies of their journal responses they had been making to the literature, and pre-departure experience as a whole. I was a little surprised and disappointed that no one brought her journal to the
meeting. Four of the students were graduating the Friday before our flight and excitement was running high on many fronts, so I attributed this to end of term stress. One student asked if she could use her journal responses to the Australian texts for another course she was taking. I thought that was a great idea, but asked that she be sure to make copies of it for her work for this seminar. Several other students said they wanted to do some more work on their journals before submitting them. I agreed and asked them to bring their pre-departure work with them to the airport so I could collect it there. We ended the session on a high note. Next stop: Australia.

**Phase Two: Immersion – The Ideal Model**

As with every other aspect of this project, the overall design of the immersion phase needed to consider all three of the need areas: personal, programmatic, and research. From a research perspective, I could argue that the longer the time overseas with the participants the better. More time would allow greater contact with schools, literature, and host nationals. However, as I priced various options, I felt that the three week period was about as much as I dared ask the students to afford financially. Also, since two of the students had families of their own, I felt that three weeks was the longest length of time the group would be comfortable away from home. Although our timeframe was dictated mostly by personal and programmatic issues, the three week period overseas is a reasonable model for short-term immersion. Other pre-service or in-service teachers would face similar concerns, so our timeframe is representative of a program that might be offered on a wider basis to others.
With the overseas timeframe of approximately three weeks established, the choice of destinations within Australia was the next concern. As noted earlier, I identified a wide range of children’s literature resources in the Melbourne area, plus I had professional contacts there who could help with the school visits. Thus, programmatic issues placed Melbourne as the cornerstone of the program, so I scheduled eight nights there. The choice to include Sydney as the second main destination was based on both programmatic and personal needs: the capitol city was a tremendous draw for the students and considered a “must see” element for visitors to Australia. I scheduled six nights for Sydney. Our budget could afford only one more city; I debated between the Great Barrier Reef at Cairns, and the deep center of Australia, Ayres Rock. Ayres Rock held greater interest for indigenous issues, but the cost for Cairns was considerably cheaper, plus it held the fascination of the reef and rain forest. Thus, I made the difficult choice of four nights in Cairns for both cost and student appeal.

Once the basic framework of the program was established, I began making contacts and arranging site visits. As part of both my own research into children’s literature and the program planning, I scheduled a trip to Australia over spring break—March, 2003. I used this time to preview site visits, arrange for speakers and meetings, purchase books and materials, and make professional contacts. I was careful to stay in the program hotels so I could become familiar with the surrounding neighborhood, the available resources, and the transportation issues we would face. I returned home with stacks of maps, guidebooks, excursion pamphlets, phone numbers and e-mail addresses,
articles, and, of course, children’s books. I then set to work finalizing the program calendar.

As an overall strategy, I sought to create a core of experiences overseas that would put the group in direct contact with as many aspects of Australian children’s literature as possible. This includes those tied to its production (authors, illustrators), sale (booksellers), display (libraries, museums, special collections), classroom application (teachers, students), critical analysis (academics), and general use (readers, average Australians). In addition, I sought to encourage and provide cultural experiences that would help participants experience Australian history and contemporary culture. These included tours, sightseeing, informal dinners with Australian hosts, and just spending time in the city and communities we were visiting. We also left time in the schedule, hoping to see the Melbourne relatives of one participant. I used these criteria and my available resources to build a core calendar of events for the program. Appendix F includes an overview of the program itself. For the purposes of my research, and addressing my specific research questions, I identified twelve specific experiential components of the program that served as the academic core for the study tour:

1. Booktalk for Teenagers session at Victoria State Library
2. Briefing of historical collection at Victoria State Library
3. Ivanhoe East Primary School visit
4. Clifton Hill Primary School visit
5. Tour of Dromkeen (Museum of Children’s Literature)
6. Books Illustrated talk with writer and illustrator Ann James
7. Tjapukai, Aboriginal Culture Center
8. Dinner(s) with Aboriginal author Boori Monty Pryor
9. Reef talk: Briefing on how to experience the Great Barrier Reef
10. Tour of “The Rocks” in Sydney based on Playing Beatie Bow
11. “Oceans of Stories” picture book exhibit at the National Maritime Museum
12. Roundtable discussion with Robyn McCallum at Macquarie University
When it came to engaging with the participants overseas—to actually *living through* the program I planned—I envisioned a three part research strategy. The first strategy centered around individual written response through the analytical notebook. I expected the participants to see, hear, smell, feel, and taste many things during their time in Australia, both planned and unplanned. The analytical notebook was one place where those comments could be captured, and then shared. At various points in the program, I anticipated collecting the notebooks, copying them for my data set, commenting on the entries, returning the notebooks, analyzing the entries with line-by-line coding to find themes and issues, then using the entries and emerging themes to inform seminar discussions.

The second strategy centered around group processes and our seminar time together. I saw these sessions functioning much like a focus group, extending the experience from that of a single individual to a more interactive, group dynamic. Madriz (2000) suggests that focus groups foster “a collectivist rather than an individualistic research method that focuses on the multivocality of participants’ attitudes, experiences, and beliefs” (Madriz, 2000, p. 836). As Madriz goes on to note, one clear advantage of the focus group is that it allows “for researchers to observe the interactive processes occurring among participants” (p. 836). This strategy supports my goal of fostering an interpretive community and exploring the social dimensions of literature, paralleling to some degree processes that occur in the K-12 classroom (see Fish, in Beach, p. 106, 1993).
However, Fontana and Frey (2000) caution that focus groups—a type of group interview—are not without their problems: “the results cannot be generalized; the emerging group culture may interfere with individual expression, and the group may be dominated by one person; and ‘groupthink’ is a possible outcome” (p. 652). Moreover, as Madriz (2000) cautions, some questions and responses may be too personal for the context of a public focus group—particularly in the case of issues that touch on unexplored racism and individual beliefs held to be “universals.”

Thus, I see a third strategy centered around working with participants individually. I envisioned individual meetings as an important time to discuss one-on-one each participant’s overall experience. My choice of strategy would depend upon the situation, the topic at hand, and the developing relationships in the group. As Fontana and Frey (2000) conclude, “to pit one type of interviewing against another is futile, a leftover from the paradigmatic quantitative/qualitative hostility of past generations. Thus an increasing number of researchers are using multimethod approaches to achieve broader and often better results” (p. 668).

I expected to combine these three strategies in a seamless, flowing fashion. Each step would build upon the last, informing and guiding the next. Ideally, I envisioned the steps as a circle of practice and inquiry as follows:
However, once the program began, I would quickly learn how research ideals can easily be modified by unexpected reality.

Phase Two: Immersion – The Reality

The first, hard reality check occurred on departure day. I had eagerly awaited the pre-departure reflections on the Australian children’s literature we had been reading. The participants had already submitted parts one and two at our third meeting on April 6, but not assignment three: reflections on any of the dozens of texts they had encountered since. I discovered at the airport that no one brought any of those reflections as, I thought, we had all agreed from our last meeting. Two participants said theirs were with another professor, fulfilling requirements for another course; copies were not made as I
had requested. Others had no discernable comment. I was disheartened, for those reflections were to be the basis of the grand learning cycle that I had envisioned. The plane was leaving shortly, so we moved on with great adventure. After all, qualitative research was flexible; I urged myself not to worry.

The second major blow to my methodological ideals came during our first full day of programming in Australia. I was thrilled to see the participants engaging with the program, even taking notes furiously at times. At one point during break, I made a few suggestions about some things to consider and comment on in their journals. I was reveling in the power of the analytical notebook! Toward the end of the day I asked about how we would like to go about exchanging the journals for me to review. I got blank stares. Then, one participant commented that these were their personal journals. Speaking for the whole group, she said “no one would be comfortable with you reading them.” As an alternative, they suggested that they would draw from their personal journals and write, at a later time, comments for the program that I could read. I argued against that, noting that raw, unfinished thoughts and ideas were exactly what I was hoping to read in their journals. I didn’t want everything filtered through the eyes of the future experience. Also, I didn’t want them wasting time rewriting. Concerns were dismissed and assurances made by the participants; I agreed and we proceeded on, attempting to remind myself of the joys of collaborative research.

The next few days began a whirlwind of activity that would last for the remainder of the program. My careful scheduling that called for a healthy blend of group program time balanced with individual reflection and relaxation time was replaced by a furious
frenzy to do and see everything. As one participant commented, “We’re only in Australia once. We want to do it all!” We were adopted by the Greek relatives of one participant and enjoyed a weekend of sixteen hour days: touring the Great Coastal Road, dining, shopping, meeting family, and just visiting. This turned out to be an incredibly special and meaningful experience for everyone. I couldn’t imagine a more powerful, exciting way to see Melbourne, to learn about Greek culture in Australia, and to enjoy the incredible hospitality that only comes from the warmth of family and friends.

But, one activity faded into the next. My hopes of having relaxed seminar meetings in the evening or over lunch were replaced by exciting offers for dinner and nights out on the town. The sheer power and lure of experience consumed us, leaving no time or energy for doing what became seen as extra “homework” while on the program. With growing despair, I watched my research goals fade farther and farther from reach.

By now it was just past midpoint in the program. We had a positive four days in Cairns at the Great Barrier Reef, and several dinners that were more relaxed. We even had several two hour seminar meetings. One in preparation for the visit to the Aboriginal Culture Center, and another in preparation for dinner with a noted Aboriginal author, Boori Monty Prior. The group was talking, getting along, and sharing bits of their thoughts and feelings. But, my anxiety level was rather high. I knew it was showing, and I had to address it.

The evening we arrived in Sydney, I called a meeting. I tried to explain my growing concerns—or rather, panic—about not having their reflections while we were engaging in the experience. I explained my research plan, the grand learning circle, the
promises I made in my research proposal, and the dynamics of working with an academic committee that expects a certain degree of methodological rigor. I was truly heartened by the sympathy shared by the group, as well as the renewed interest in my own, personal needs for the research project. One student even asked if she could read the research proposal. Quite honestly, I started to wonder if I had really succeeded in mentoring them as co-researchers and making them a real part of this project at all. Why hadn’t I shared the formal research proposal with the group? Actually, it hadn’t occurred to me. Just like their journals, was my proposal too personal for their eyes? I became so painfully aware of a “them” versus “me” dynamic that had evolved.

We agreed that since the program had only one week left, we would make the most of the time we had in Australia and favor experience itself over formal reflection. Actually, given the fatigue level and group dynamic that evolved, I doubted if there really was an alternative. If I mandated on-site journaling at this point, I risked fracturing group cohesion and forcing angry, distorted, or pressured responses. Also, I feared privately that the participants might simply withdraw from the study all together, leaving me with nothing. The participants reminded me that they were keeping an active journal throughout every step of the trip and that they, too, wanted to make the most of their experience academically. They promised to devote considerable time and energy upon return to Ohio to complete the requested reflections. This was not an ideal strategy, but I had invited the participants along as co-researchers. Philosophically, as well as practically, I had to let them be part of this process, and the decision-making of how we
were to proceed. After all, their interests and needs were just as important to them as mine were to me.

To clarify our understandings from that meeting, I wrote an overview and guide sheet for the written work that was needed to complete the course, and to provide the necessary data for my study. This overview is included as Appendix G.

We enjoyed the remaining time in Sydney, feasted on a farewell dinner overlooking Darling Harbor, and prepared for the long plane ride home.

**Phase Three: Post-program Debriefing**

It was agreed that the participants would complete their reflections and send them via e-mail no later than July 20. We decided to schedule a full-day wrap-up session that everyone would attend in August. Through e-mail exchanges, everyone agreed to meet at campus for Saturday, August 16, 2003.

All participants did e-mail their work by the end of July and I set to work reviewing their materials to prepare for the debriefing. I made working copies of their materials and collected them in a binder. Then, after reading through each set several times, I did line by line coding to identify points of impact and meaning that the participants noted in their writing for each key experience, or reflection question (see Appendix G for a listing of specific writing topics). I then created a master file where I noted significant comments from each participant, as well as my own perceptions and reflections. I approached this compilation like a grand analytical memo. I saw it as a private document in which I felt free to “write through” thoughts and ideas, reliving the
experience from both the participants’ as well as my own perspective. It was a fascinating, and at times enlightening, experience that I will condense in the next chapter.

From this review and analysis of the participant responses, as well as my own experience with the program, I identified a series of guiding questions to use during our debriefing session. This was the last chance to engage with the entire group, so I reviewed all of my specific research questions and sought to verify emerging ideas as well as cover areas not fully addressed. I had initially thought of doing this as a grounded survey, however I had just asked for (and received) considerable writing in the weeks following the trip. I had a strong sense that further written requests would not yield much more than what they had already provided. Therefore, I thought the group process would be better to stimulate interest and enthusiasm for the topics while letting all participants contribute and learn from one another. As described by Madriz (2000), I treated the session like a focus group and identified the following guiding questions, in order of discussion:

1. What understandings of another culture can you have through children’s literature without experience?

2. What does experience add to those understandings?

   A side question that emerged during discussion was: What does this mean for us as teachers?

3. How did children’s literature help prepare you for the trip overseas?

4. What are the potentials of cross-cultural children’s literature?

5. What are the limitations of cross-cultural children’s literature?

6. What goals might you have in using cross-cultural children’s literature in teaching children?
7. What would you look for when selecting and using cross-cultural literature?

I wrote each of these questions on large, post-it presentation pad sheets. The first three questions were addressed together. Each participant was given small post-it pads and asked to write responses anonymously, then place their post-its on the large question sheet. Once all participants had had a chance to respond, I led the group through a discussion of each question, and the assorted responses. The remaining four questions were handled more like a brainstorming session. In these cases, I placed the large post-it question sheet on the board, then wrote each comment below as it was offered.

The session lasted approximately 4 ½ hours including lunch. The overall tone of the session was positive and enthusiastic. In addition to my pre-defined questions, the session offered a range of insights into the whole experience overall. At many times, it became a lively and flowing discussion. The participants were excited about the topics, and had much to contribute. The session exceeded my hopes and I was truly energized for long work yet ahead. I taped recorded the session and transcribed it to computer by the first week in September.

Also, the participants agreed to complete the IDI post-test on their own and mail me the instrument. As I planned for the debriefing session, I was unsure of the tenor of the meeting and felt uncomfortable throwing a “test” at them in the midst of all I wanted to cover in the session. In hindsight, this was an unnecessary worry as I think they probably could have completed the IDI at the end of our session. All participants but one returned the post-test IDI by the end of September. I e-mailed this fifth participant later
in the fall, but got no response. She had moved on with a busy life, and I decided to be grateful with what data I had already received.

The program was over, but my work had just begun. The next months would be spent reviewing and analyzing a growing body of data, struggling to make sense of a disparate and intense experience. Two of the participants were most interested in continuing to work with the project, so I collaborated with them to prepare a presentation of our findings for the OSU Children’s Literature Conference. This turned out to be a richly rewarding experience for all three of us, and an invaluable process that helped crystallize some of my ideas about the experience overall. Also, this need to work together offered me the opportunity to member check my emerging data chapter with my co-presenters. In particular, I was able to discuss at length the Model of Cultural Relativity that I will develop in the following chapter. The pressure to present at the conference was a powerful motivator that gave a real, tangible deadline with which to work.

Before moving the discussion to the actual findings that emerged, I would like to review briefly my strategies for data management and analysis, as well as why you, the reader, should lend credibility at all to the findings I will present.

Data Management and Analysis

For conceptual clarity, I see two key dimensions that form the basis of my study. First are the all of the elements that interacted with the participants throughout the program. These include the children’s literature itself, other students, me as group leader,
cultural informants, and the thousands of people, places, and things that we encountered prior to departure as well as in Australia itself. All of these elements combined to create both the literary experiences—the beginning focus and foundation of our inquiry—followed by the increasingly complex lived experiences overseas. Second are all the analyses of, responses to, and observations of those experiences. The range of products that resulted—written notes, journal reflections, observations, comments, thoughts, discussions, drawings, etc.—form the core data for my study.

I have already described at length the processes whereby I have enabled, or facilitated, those experiences. This included the selection of and engagement with the literature itself, the use of seminar time as a form of focus group, and the strategy of writing/journaling that produced rich, descriptive writing to analyze. Throughout that discussion, I have described my strategy and style of interacting with the participants that would yield the data for my study. However, it is also important to clarify what Tedlock (2000) terms my “observation of participation” to help lend methodological rigor to my gathering of that data, and thus confidence to the analysis I will present later.

After gaining permission from the students, I audio taped most of our class sessions. Exceptions to this were the first two administrative meetings held prior to formal research approval from human subjects. Also, I elected not to audio tape our mid-program meeting in Sydney where we discussed a number of personal issues. I then transcribed each taped session, as close to the session date as possible. I also maintained my notes as well as brainstorming sheets from each session for later analysis.
Following group discussions and individual conversations, I adhered to the suggestions by Fontana and Frey (2000) to: “(a) take notes regularly and promptly; (b) write everything down, no matter how unimportant it may seem at the time; (c) try to be as inconspicuous as possible in note taking; and (d) analyze notes frequently” (p. 656). In addition, I took copious notes throughout the experience, attempting to capture both the participants’ as well as my own reactions to the experiences we were encountering. These strategies resulted in a wide range of data from multiple perspectives and sources. Data emerging from participants themselves included: written journal comments, questions and comments shared during our seminars and at our site visits, informal comments made throughout the program, e-mails, written notes and verbal comments made at the debriefing session. Data emerging from me as researcher included: researcher reflexive journal, analytical memos, notes taken during class sessions and site visits, reading journal comments made to the children’s literature I read, thoughts and comments stemming from interaction with other faculty, students, colleagues, cultural informants, etc.

For the bulk of my data analysis, I elected to use grounded theory, an inductive strategy where theory is generated through inquiry and constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glesne, 1999). In this process, data are analyzed on an ongoing basis as part of the process of inquiry, as well as following the data collection phase as more typically done in a quantitative study. Throughout the immersion experience, I maintained my researcher journal and wrote analytical memos to myself throughout. I often compared my own thoughts and feelings to what I perceived the others to be
experiencing. This was a space for me to explore ideas, themes, goals, frustrations, contradictions, and a host of other thoughts and feelings that emerged throughout the experience.

Charmaz (2000) suggests coding emerging data as it is collected. To the extent possible, I attempted to do this. But, as noted above, the flow of data—in particular the participant response journals—was not as frequent or timely as I had hoped. Also, my own fatigue during the program limited my energy and enthusiasm at times. Despite these negatives, I had ample data to analyze and an abundance of material to consider. I began my reviews of the written materials from the students, as well as our transcribed class sessions, to look for patterns and themes. Charmaz describes the coding process for this strategy:

Coding helps us to gain a new perspective on our material and to focus further data collection, and may lead to unforeseen directions….Coding starts the chain of theory development. Codes that account for our data take form together as nascent theory that, in turn, explains these data and directs further data gathering. (p. 515)

This process begins with line-by-line coding, and results in sensitizing concepts that serve as points of departure for building analysis. As both a data collection and analysis strategy, this method of constant comparison means: “(a) comparing different people (such as their views, situations, actions, accounts, and experiences, (b) comparing data from the same individuals and with themselves at different points in time, (c) comparing incident with incident, (d) comparing data with category, and (e) comparing a category with other categories” (Charmaz, 2000, p. 515). Such a strategy encourages
triangulation of data sources, revisioned by Richardson (2000) as *crystallization* in a postmodern context to reflect a multiplicity of perspectives and interpretations.

All aspects of the study and program worked together to result in a wide range of data sources. To help illustrate that breadth, and how I used line-by-line coding with each source, I present data examples in the following table. I began by selecting data from our visit to the picture book exhibit “Oceans of Stories” at the National Maritime Museum in Sydney. Participant journal responses made to *The Rabbits* (Marsden & Tan, 1998), one of the texts and illustrators featured at the exhibit, helped me to chain other bits of our experience together to demonstrate their interconnections. The table includes data from our pre-departure seminar and readings, site visits and meetings with author/illustrators in Australia, and even participant speculation about future teaching made in our program debriefing. Taken as a whole, the data help illustrate the interplay between literary, lived, and professional experiences that the study sought to explore; the coding and researcher comments reflect how I sought to draw threads of meaning from a wealth of data.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Data Sample</th>
<th>Researcher Coding/Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exhibit description in National Maritime Museum Brochure</td>
<td>The Oceans of Stories exhibition explores how illustrators of Australian children’s books interpret maritime themes such as journeys, family, boating, swimming, fantasy and the environment</td>
<td>Themes – Wide range Authorial intention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant journal reflection, open response to site visit post-program Related comments from 2 participants</td>
<td>1 -- <em>The Rabbits</em> was being displayed [at the exhibit] but I am not quite sure how it is connected to the ocean theme 2 -- I am surprised by some of the selections. <em>The Rabbits</em> doesn't have a whole lot to do with the sea, other than a few pages showing the boats the rabbits came on</td>
<td>Themes – Interesting how narrowly these participants are interpreting theme of “the sea.” I saw it connecting abstractly here as powerful vehicle for invasion, postcolonial interpretation Differing constructions of meaning Similarity of participant responses Triangulating sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant journal comment on pre-departure reading of <em>The Rabbits</em></td>
<td>At first I thought maybe it was a story about the white men taking over the land and lives of the Native Americans here in America. Than I began to try and apply it to Australian culture and realized that it was probably coming from the standpoint of the British white men invading the lands and lives of the Aborigines</td>
<td>Global Ed/postcolonial ties between US and Australia Seeing connections, common history Linking familiar to unfamiliar as way of drawing meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant comment made in pre-departure seminar</td>
<td><em>The Rabbits</em> reminds me of <em>Encounter</em> [Yolen]. I might use them together</td>
<td>Intertextual connections Finding similarities across cultures Teaching strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant journal reflection, open response to site visit post-program Related comments from 2 participants</td>
<td>1 -- I think that talking with Ann James and going to Dromkeen made this experience even better because I had more knowledge about the illustrations 2 – I…saw a display for Ann James and after meeting and seeing her at work I had a whole new appreciation for her work.</td>
<td>Connecting Experiences Importance of background knowledge Lived experience making literary one more meaningful Meeting the authors/illustrators really had big impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation of participation, from researcher field notes</td>
<td>Wow, I’m amazed at how the participants really seemed to enjoy the visit – they were nestled into the various nooks and crannies, reading intently after a long day. The design of exhibit really fosters engagement, relaxing. Could have stayed longer</td>
<td>Social and Physical contexts/climate for learning Factors of engagement/setting Methodology/pacing of program, finding balance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant journal comment</td>
<td>The exhibit really started off on the wrong foot with the craggy old woman at the ticket counter</td>
<td>Social context/climate for learning Impact of factors outside of your control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of physical setting of exhibit, from researcher field notes</td>
<td>Reading areas included big stuffed bear with captain’s hat; physical artifacts from the illustration process; videos about illustration process; some exhibits interactive, visual, others quiet, passive</td>
<td>Physical context/climate for learning Multiple learning/teaching styles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant comment on <em>The Rabbits</em> from debriefing session</td>
<td>I would [use <em>The Rabbits</em>] to teach the kids about what’s happened. And then you have to teach them a course of action. I think kids, a lot of adults, are very prejudice….You need to follow it up with something positive</td>
<td>Global Ed/Social Action Ideas for professional practice using children’s literature</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 8: Example of Data Sources and Coding**
The range of data in the above sample also helps to illustrate how I sought to gather data from multiple sources at various times throughout the study, thus enabling triangulation or, as Richardson (2000) suggests, crystallization of findings. A closer look at the debriefing session offers an example of how I enacted this strategy methodologically. First, the session itself elicited participant comments, questions, and discussion, thus providing additional key data. Second, the sequence in time at which the debriefing occurred is strategic. Our meeting was held about six weeks after the program, allowing the participants time to rest and reflect without the pressures of the program. Gathering data after the initial glow of the experience has dissipated is noted by both Lambert (1989) and Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) as an important consideration when assessing the impact of emotionally intense experiences such as study abroad.

Third, the debriefing allowed me to compare different forms of data expressed in different contexts. For example, I could compare written journal comments noted in private to verbal ones shared at the group session, thus enabling me to verify the stability of those observations. Finally, as Janesick (2000) suggests, the debriefing enabled me to check tentative assumptions and emerging theories with the participants (member checking). For example, based on my participant observation, our class discussions, and my review of the journal responses, I postulated that the pre-departure reading of children’s literature helped provide background information and a context for the experience itself. To check these assumptions, I asked two related questions. First, a broad question that asked what understanding about another culture we can gain through
children’s literature. Later, I asked specifically how children’s literature helped prepare participants for the overseas trip. These two questions provided points of comparison to earlier comments while allowing me to address the same issue from slightly different perspectives. The full list of questions used as focal points for our debriefing was listed earlier in this chapter.

**Establishment of Trustworthiness**

Writing has already been discussed as a tool for learning from the participant’s perspective. However, it also plays an important role in establishing the trustworthiness of qualitative research. All types of writing—field notes and observations, journal entries, analytical memos, reflections, questions, thick description, etc.—serve as points of inquiry, as well as documentations of the research process (Glesne, 1999; Janesick, 2000; Richardson, 2000). These reflections are the backbone of qualitative research, serving not only to build a data trail, but to foster reflexive self awareness of the researcher as well as. “Reflexivity—as well as the poststructural and postmodern sensibilities concerning quality in qualitative research—demands that we interrogate each of our selves regarding the ways in which research efforts are shaped and staged around the binaries, contradictions, and paradoxes that form our lives” (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, p. 183). This is exactly what I attempted to do throughout the experience itself, as well as through the writing of the very document you are now reading.

Given my paradigmatic stance, it was necessary to place myself—as a person and a researcher—squarely into this study. This allowed me as a researcher to write and
analyze my own responses to the literature along with those provided by the students. As shall be discussed in later chapters, this intensive self reflection and analysis challenged my own thinking as well. I identified, and then struggled with, the areas of contradiction and paradox suggested by Lincoln and Guba (2000). Paradoxes were evident numerous times, particularly when I noted differences among our responses to the same experience, both literary and lived.

The writing activities noted above formed the basis of my reflexive journal and were carried out throughout the entire program. I used both paper journals for field notes as well as a laptop computer. This wealth of written material was a critical form of data for qualitative inquiry (Richardson, 2000). In these written documents, I attempted to provide rich, thick description of what I was observing, and the context of that observation itself. The following example from my researcher journal illustrates how I struggled—in writing—to describe and analyze the interplay between literature and experience following a two-hour briefing at the Victoria State Library:

We were sitting in the seminar room of a majestic library, “listening” and “looking” through more than 100 years of Australian history. Could the same talk have been done without literature? What did the literature add to the talk that a mere historical briefing on Australian history could not? Social history, relationship of child to family and society, the opportunity to touch and feel these tangible artifacts helped to make the briefing more real. Donning white gloves, we gingerly leafed through texts ranging from a few decades to more than 100 years old. We touched one ancient picture book, carefully lifting the protective tissue to view the illustration below. We learned that this type of book was for the very wealthy, probably read to a child by a nanny. Look at its condition–almost new. How different from today’s board books, dog-eared, chewed. Seeing, feeling these relics from the past illustrates the importance of bringing in historical artifacts and primary sources when teaching about history. Children’s literature does this.
During the program, I compared my own thoughts and feelings to those shared by others, and then again as I received the journal comments after the program. I re-read again and again the participant journal reflections, our class transcripts, and my own researcher journal comments to draw meaning, then reflected in writing as I “thought through” how all of this addresses my research questions.

As I describe the data itself in the coming chapter, my goal will be to distill and summarize key findings, providing sufficient detail and context to support my assertions. I will be telling the story through “writing that allows the reader to enter the research context” (Glesne, 199, p. 32). This strategic decision resulted, at times, in writing that will appear more informal than a traditional, quantitative dissertation. However, I feel that the difference in style is warranted to give justice to the experience itself, to reflect the emotions and intensity of our time together, and to help the reader draw meaning from this study overall.

I endeavored to include other strategies suggested by Creswell (1998) to help support the validity and trustworthiness of my research. Some I have already noted in the description of my methodology, others will emerge throughout this document. As a summary, I offer the following examples to illustrate how I employed a number of key strategies suggested by Creswell. Each of these elements are woven into the story I have been, and will continue, to tell.

Exploring Researcher Bias: Beginning with the very conception of this study, I have endeavored to articulate and present my paradigmatic stance. As the study progressed, I continually challenged myself to consider how my own views of the world
influenced my own interpretations and observations, as well as those of the participants. Rather than remove my self through feigned objectivity, I have done the opposite and considered my role as researcher to be both active and instrumental in the program, the research, and its outcomes. I have attempted to practice reflexive self awareness throughout the study to help become aware of and explore my own biases, and how I impact the study overall.

**Negative Case Analysis:** I specifically sought out and encouraged a variety of responses to both literary and lived experiences. Where possible, points of difference and contest were seen as dialogic learning opportunities, both in class discussions as well as in my own analysis. I frequently struggled to understand how the “same” experience—literary or lived—could result in such varied responses.

**Peer Reviews:** I had several opportunities overseas to ask colleagues their responses to the group, our discussions, and the material we were critiquing. However, the larger opportunity for this came after the program, and once I had the opportunity to conduct my initial data analysis. Preparing for a conference presentation was the key driving force in soliciting feedback on the model of cultural relativity from several U.S. colleagues, as well as a trusted friend from Australia. Delivering the conference presentation afforded the opportunity for feedback from over 100 participants, as well as my co-presenters.

**Member Checking:** Informal one-on-one discussions overseas, as well as group class discussions, afforded me the opportunity to check my initial thoughts and ideas with the participants. Preparing for the conference afforded me the next opportunity to check
more concrete conclusions with two of the most involved participants. In particular, I shared the model of cultural relativity and the first 2/3 of my data chapter—the portion written to date at that time—with my co-presenters. Once they had reviewed the materials at length, I asked if they agreed with my representation of the group experience, as well as the accuracy and utility of the model of cultural relativity that emerged. Other key findings were also checked prior to finalizing this document.

Triangulation: The variety of data sources I collected, as well as the multiple points in time over which I collected data, enabled me to base conclusions on more than a single observation at one point in time. I adopted Richardson’s (2000) more fluid term crystallization and sought to consider multiple factors, including the context in which observations were made and in which conclusions were drawn.

Prolonged Engagement, Persistent Observation: Creswell (1998) suggests an “extended time in the field so that you are able to develop trust [and] learn the culture” (in Glesne, 1999, p. 32). My intense, three-week period with the participants in Australia afforded me that very opportunity.

Despite these rigors, the project I have described—and qualitative research in general—is a human product. As a researcher I am not perfect, nor do I present my study as a model of perfection. Rather, it is an exploration of the human condition at one moment in time. Glesne (1999) advises that “part of demonstrating the trustworthiness of your data is to realize the limitations of your study. Your responsibility is to do the best that you can under certain circumstances. Detailing those circumstances helps readers to
understand the nature of your data” (p. 152). That is exactly what I have endeavored to do.

**Overview of Research Questions and Methodology**

In the preceding pages, I outlined a complex program that resulted from my efforts to engage with and balance three main areas: the personal needs and concerns of all participating, the programmatic needs of running an overseas trip, and the research needs for conducting an academic study. This three-part dynamic had tremendous influence on what I did, when, why, and with whom, leading to the methodological orchestration chronicled above. To close this chapter, I will refocus specifically on the research dimensions of the project and summarize how this endeavor will enable me to answer the very questions that I set out to explore in chapter one.

Research question one addressed the literary experience and asked, broadly, how children’s literature can serve as a bridge between Australian and U.S. cultures. To answer this, our group explored first our pre-conceived notions of Australian culture, then began a reading program of Australian literature found in the U.S., as well as of selected texts imported directly from Australia. Through both individual participant journal comments as well as group discussions in pre-departure seminars, we reflected on what texts were available, what they seemed to depict, what meanings we drew from them, and how all of this impacted our understandings of Australia. This was phase one, done in the familiar surroundings of home, weeks and months before the physical journey that was to come.
Research question two addressed the lived experience and asked how children’s literature could enrich the actual immersion in a foreign culture. To explore this potential, I designed a three-week overseas trip to Australia for the participants, using children’s literature as its focus. We met with a wide range of people, visited institutions, and accessed resources—all related to the production, use, and critique of children’s literature. To help address the specific question of comparing the literary and experience, I designed a private walking tour of “The Rocks” in Sydney based around the historical fiction novel *Playing Beatie Bow* (Park, 1980), read during our pre-departure phase.

Participants journaled throughout the immersion phase, offering written reflections on each of the twelve key experiential components of the program as well as on three focus questions: the impact of one-on-one experiences, the thoughts gleaned from seeing literature “in action,” and the comparisons made between the literary and lived experiences. After returning home from the overseas trip, I re-gathered the participants for a debriefing, specifically asking how literature helped to enrich meanings, both as a pre-departure exercise and while on-site. I encouraged the group to consider both potentials and limitations of literary and lived experiences, as well as the interaction between the two.

Research question three addressed the professional dimension and asked how immersion in the children’s literature of another culture, as well as an overseas lived experience, can support and further the goals of global education for pre-service teachers. I began by making the theoretical connections to these three dimensions, defining in chapter two a unique point of inquiry that would draw from and integrate each dimension.
and each phase of the program. During the pre-departure phase, I introduced aspects of
critical literacy by problematizing cultural authenticity, the representation of people and
cultures, and the active role readers play in drawing meaning. The immersion phase
specifically included school visits and classroom observations where participants would
meet Australian students and teachers, thus living through what it means to be both an
“American” and a “foreigner” in the eyes of others. The post-program debriefing looked
back to reflect on where we had been, but also looked forward to the participants’ role as
classroom teachers. I structured discussion questions that explored how participants
viewed culture, literature, and their role as an intercultural educator. These questions
helped tie the overall experience together as we considered literature as a bridge between
cultures, the role that experience plays in our understanding, and implications this has for
us as classroom teachers.

These were the questions that drove this study, and strategies that I used to guide
it along the way. Join me now as I explore the outcomes of that incredible journey
through literature and experience.
CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The story you are about to read is a complex one. It is my effort to make sense of an incredible adventure with five extraordinary people. Together, we journeyed the globe, seeing new places and meeting new people through literary and lived experience. I am the master teller of the tale, but I have endeavored to weave in many of the thoughts, feelings, and voices of those who traveled with me. It is both my story and the story of others, as they have shared with me and as I have lived it with them.

I have tried to prepare you, as best as I could, for what you are about to read. If another were to conduct this study and to write this chapter, I have no doubt that you would read a much different account. I struggled to be honest with you about my goals and my expectations, the plans that I made and changed along the way, and the limitations of a very human experience. I invite you to join us for part of that adventure, to read our words, to hear our stories, and to draw your own conclusions.

In the pages that follow, relive the wonder of children’s literature and take a magical journey with us to the Land of OZ. The sky is darkening and the wind is picking up. Hurry. Grab on to your imagination and don’t look back. The Emerald City is there,
right over the horizon. Just follow the yellow brick road. We did, and this is what we found.

A Place Far, Far Away

Australia is a continent more than 12,000 miles from the heartland of the United States, a geographic fact that means my group from the Midwest would have to leave the planet to get much farther in physical distance from the piece of earth we call home. As the first step in exploring this strange and distant land, I began by asking what preexisting images we had of Australia and Australian culture(s). This beginning is quite broad and, by intent, goes well beyond the domain of children’s literature to include other media, popular culture, and personal experience. Regardless of the source, these ideas and images would be our starting point for the journey ahead. Here is what we found.

Individual written reflections and our class brainstorming sessions revealed a fairly similar view for the participants. Images, icons, descriptors, and soundbites that we shared included:

Physical Attributes:

- The Outback - A “nowhere place” in the desert that is dry, dusty, rugged, and harsh country
- Wild and dangerous animals such as crocodiles, great white sharks, killer spiders, lizards and snakes.
- Less dangerous, but equally exotic creatures such as kangaroos, koalas, dingoes, Tasmanian devils, wombats, and platypus.
- Wide open spaces, beautiful scenery, warm climate
- Lush rainforests, crystal clear waters, and the tropical paradise of the Great Barrier Reef.
While some participants had some urban images in their minds—such as the Sydney Opera House, New Year’s Eve fireworks over the Harbor Bridge, or sports tournaments for the 2000 Olympic Games—the thrust of the group’s preconceived notions centered around rural Australia and outback scenes.

Initial thoughts of Australians and the man-made aspects of Australian culture reflected this rugged, rural imagery and the types of people who might populate it. Ideas included:

- Casual, friendly, inviting attitude: “Throw another shrimp on the Barbie”
- Mateship and male bonding
- Down to earth, no-frills, simple “meat and potatoes” attitude
- Partying and revelry: drinking Foster’s lager, joking in loud voices
- Love of sports and outdoors; rugged individualism
- Attractive, “strapping” men with long blonde hair.

These characteristics reminded us of the “Old West” in the United States, yet with a distinctively Australian flair.

As our class discussion turned from the physical to the more human, cultural side of Australia, it became easy to see where many of these ideas came from. The media emerged as the most identifiable and powerful conveyer. Handsome, rugged and charismatic Australian male actors made a most memorable impression. Figures such as Heath Ledger, Mel Gibson, Hugh Jackman, and Russell Crowe quickly emerged on our class list. Female characters such as Nicole Kidman and Olivia Newton John also made the list. Acknowledging the potential sex appeal factor that might influence our entirely female class group, we argued that Australian male actors are more numerous and more readily identified with Australian culture in the U.S. than their female counterparts.
Beyond Hollywood sex symbols, media images also included Steve Irwin, U.S. Saturday morning television’s famed “Crocodile Hunter.” Irwin’s TV personality exudes a host of identifiable characteristics we saw as: fearless, curious, stupid, juvenile, and loud. But, Irwin’s passion for nature, animals, and the outdoors coupled with a humorous, self-deprecating personality make him an engaging and memorable figure in educational television. Although we later learned on-site and through *Culture Shock: Australia!* that many Australians share a cultural cringe at Irwin’s caricature of a bushman, he is at present one of Australia’s more memorable and identifiable pop culture exports to the U.S.

Adding to our images of a continent and people far away were more recent movies such as “Kangaroo Jack,” a film loaded with a host of idiotic and somewhat offensive U.S. and Australian stereotypes. For the sake of comedy, the film was an equal opportunity offender and played off of such U.S. and Australian caricatures as the Italian mobster, the drunk but eminently resourceful bushman, the wise Aboriginal, the loud, greedy, and culturally ignorant American. Other television and feature films that were part of our group’s collective consciousness included “Roadwarriors,” “Disney’s Rescuers Down Under,” “Survivor: Outback,” “Mary Kate and Ashley Down Under!,” and “Sabrina the Teenage Witch Down Under.” Many of these incorporate stock adventure plots or address teenage angst motifs, playing off setting to lend a sense of exotic to a serial and otherwise banal tale. Judging by the comments shared by our group about these films, their impact was to showcase little more than the surface stereotypes that we noted earlier.
Beyond the public and impersonal media, our group had some other, more personal connections to Australia. Several participants remember writing and/or hearing K-12 reports on Australia, although little more than basic geography and koala-awareness remained. Personal meetings with some Australian travelers in the U.S. left impressions of wealth (they had 3 homes in Australia) and friendliness (they kissed both cheeks for a greeting). One participant has close ties with her husband’s extended family in Melbourne that spawned fleeting tidbits of life and culture. But her impressions were colored more by the family’s Greek heritage, leaving little about wider Australian culture that was more in-depth.

As we built our list of ideas and connections, I realized that our range of exposure to a foreign land was actually wider than I expected for a small group of Midwesterners. Our discussions illustrated just how prevalent Australia is in certain realms of the U.S. entertainment world. Had our target country/culture been less appealing to American pop culture, the list would be infinitely shorter. Despite this deceptively wide coverage, though, it is evident that those understandings of Australian culture were quite shallow and tentative.

Moreover, as we contemplated where we attributed those preconceptions of Australia, popular media dominated our collective memory to the virtual exclusion of literature—both children’s and adult. Had we been exposed to Australian literature in the past but failed to recall it? This exercise helped lay the groundwork for our next phase: immersion in Australian children’s literature.
Access and Availability

Our review of Australian children’s literature began at the local level by identifying and accessing the world of Australian children’s literature in the U.S. What texts would we find and what would they tell us about Australia? Although this goal seems clear and straightforward enough, carrying out this task illustrates a curious dynamic of intercultural literature in the U.S. As with my pilot study on Irish children’s literature, it was surprising to see first-hand just how difficult it is to clearly and quickly identify Australian authors, publishers, and texts in the U.S. Although we would gradually discover a wider range of books, our initial text searches at the local library or through on-line sources such as Amazon.com using the keyword “Australia” were rather limiting and narrow in scope. They tended to produced mostly books about Australia as a subject, namely informational and nonfiction books. Thus, because of access and availability, these texts became the next step in our journey through Australian children’s literature.

One category of text in this realm includes series publications that take a common, universal theme and explore it in multiple contexts around the world. Themes can be a broad geopolitical concept as continent, country, or city. For example, G’day, Australia! (Sayre, 2003) is part of Millbrook Press’s “our amazing continents series,” Australia (Dahl, 1997), is one of Bridgestone Publishing’s countries of the world series, and Sydney (Stein & Dowling, 1998) is part of Children’s Press’s “cities of the world” series.
Organizing themes can also be more sociologically oriented and explore ideas such as “growing up in …” or “families in…” Browne’s (1985) *An Aboriginal Family*—part of series introducing families from 35 different countries, each in a single volume—is one such example. These types of texts provide some basic facts and reference points about a culture or region enabling comparisons, but they can also highlight broad generalities in a boilerplate format that risks minimizing deeper cultural differences. For example, a reader could review a series on “families around the world” and leave feeling that all families are essentially the same, although their houses, clothes, and foods might differ. Later I will discuss how these texts may serve a crucial need at certain developmental stages. For now, I wish to merely point out the existence of such series, and the potential to provoke certain types of response within readers.

When searching for Australian children’s literature texts in the U.S., it took my students and me more dedicated work and research to find fictional texts that are not merely about Australia as a subject, but ones that incorporate Australian characters, themes, or settings. Internet resources are invaluable and, with the right patience and endurance, we were able to access booklists from ozlit.com or The Children’s Book Council of Australia. At this point, cyberspace links the U.S. researcher to the world of Australian children’s literature in Australia. For me as an outsider working thousands of miles away, I found this new world exciting but overwhelming. The potential texts to review mushroomed in number, but were difficult to access easily and inexpensively in the U.S. This is particularly frustrating when reviewing picture books where, at times, one goal is to quickly browse the art and text of many examples to gain a feel for the
range of publications. Also, children’s literature devotees of any culture face a universal challenge: any number of interesting and highly regarded texts are no longer in print. Thus, the endeavor to find and access Australian children’s literature in the U.S. became more like a treasure hunt with one’s success depending upon tenacity as well as the amount of time and money available for the expedition.

As I stepped back from and thought more deeply about the first part of this treasure hunt, I realized that a main part of the focus had been on the content of the texts themselves: fiction and nonfiction representation of Australia in children’s literature. But this focus only addressed part of the equation. As a researcher holding to a constructivist viewpoint, I see individual texts as constructions themselves. Thus, to understand the product, it is important to examine the producer as well. To enable more critical analysis in this project, it would be essential to consider not only what was being said about Australia and Australian culture, but who was saying it. This resulted in a dual focus of looking both at content as well as authorship of texts. This second focus on authorship leads to questions of selection, voice, perspective, and authenticity in representation, issues which are common to discourse within critical theory. As we located and examined texts, I encouraged participants to challenge the texts and ask questions about what experience the author had with Australia and Australian cultures. Again, as our experience demonstrated, that would be easier said than done.
Cultural Chameleons

As I found with the pilot study in Ireland, it is extremely hard to search simply for texts whose authors identify with a particular country or culture. As noted earlier, the database searches that the students and I conducted seem to tie in more to the content of the text than to specific traits of the author. When present, information about the author/illustrator’s cultural background was found in the end flaps, in the publisher’s advertising blurbs, or in the brief author/illustrator bios at the end of the text. Yet, such information can be very brief, or even deleted for the paperback edition. For example, the U.S. editions of Graeme Base’s *The Sign of the Seahorse* (1992) and *The Water Hole* (2001) refer only to the author as living “in Melbourne, Australia.” Judging by this information alone, we could just as easily guess that Base was a recent immigrant who grew up in an entirely different culture, not a long-term resident with deep knowledge of Australia. We do learn, however, on the endflap of *My Grandma Lived in Gooligulch* (1990) that “He moved to Melbourne, Australia, at the age of eight and now lives and works in a house near the sea with his artist wife, Robyn, and their three children.” By contrast, the Australian paperback editions of well-known picture book author Mem Fox’s *Whoever You Are* (1997) and *The Magic Hat* (2002) provide no information whatsoever on her background.

Adding to the difficulty in readily identifying works, and authors, as Australian can be the content of the books themselves. Markings of Australia may lurk deep within the pages of a text—or be missing altogether—by chance, by design of the author, or through the publisher’s homogenization of literature for a mass market. Thus, the text
itself may fail to give noticeable clues as to its cultural heritage, enabling the reader to place the text anywhere his or her imagination and experience allows. For example, Alison Lester’s *Magic Beach* may appear so universal and general in setting and theme that it could be associated with many locations and cultures.

In our final debriefing session, one participant made a rather apologetic admission to the group. Although she had been actively researching and reading Australian children’s literature before departure, it was not until she returned home from the trip that she recognized an old childhood favorite, Margaret Wild’s *There’s a Sea in My Bedroom* (1987), as Australian. She told the story of her mother loving to read this book to her as a child, over and over again. She couldn’t really remember exactly why she enjoyed it so; just that it had many happy memories as part of her early literary experience. As she spoke, the class explored the front and back covers of her dog-eared copy and found a few lines of text about the author and illustrator. Flipping through the book itself, we saw images of a child and a bedroom like many that could be found in the suburban U.S. The book appeared to us as an intriguing child’s fantasy book, but lacked any significant marking of “Australianess.” She commented, “It had an ‘international award’ sticker on the front so I knew it was international, but not from which country.” It was not until she visited Australia herself for the program and saw bookstores and library shelves with dozens of Margaret Wild books that she made the connection between Australia and this old favorite. It took her own experience in the world to identify Margaret Wild as Australian; the text itself and publisher provided little help.
The same participant had a similar reaction to a book her younger brother enjoyed and re-read countless times: *The Eleventh Hour: A Curious Mystery* (1988) by Graeme Base. She noted in her reflections, “I remember my brother reading this book for hours during our childhood. I never realized that Graeme Base was an Australian author.” Like she did years before, her brother adopted this “foreign” book as his own and was largely unaware of the international dimensions to a cherished story and author.

Independently, this student came to some of the same conclusions and feelings that had been surfacing through my own, personal journey through intercultural children’s literature: a growing interest in the cultural background and heritage of authors and illustrators. Commenting on the larger context of her observations, she added that “beyond learning many great aspects of Australian culture I think that I have gained a new respect for authors and illustrators and will make a conscious effort to identify where the original publication of the book was made and when.”

I suggest that within the realm of international children’s literature there exists a curious sort of identity confusion. Both books and authors can wander through our world as cultural chameleons, crossing international borders seamlessly and blending in with the local environment. As the above examples illustrated, these chameleons become adopted by us not as odd relics of another time and place, but as a natural part of the world we see as our own.

Our research with its ethnographic focus highlighted the importance of discovering these cultural chameleons. To appreciate the Australian connections that influence our literary world in the United States, we struggled to identify the cultural
heritage of authors and illustrators we once saw as rootless and generic, or even “American.” Particularly helpful in this regard was to identify which authors are seen as “Australian” from an Australian perspective. In particular, the Australian Children’s Book Council (CBC) was a useful source in their lists of and awards for Australian children’s authors/illustrators, as well as their web links to author homepages. After identifying key authors and illustrators as Australian, it became much easier to track these chameleons outside of their native habitat.

**A Literary Feast**

My review of texts both in the U.S. and on my scouting trip to Australia was a little like stumbling through a Swedish smorgasbord ten minutes before the restaurant closes. Time was short. Really short. And I was madly grabbing for bits of meatballs, salad, noodles, some of that funny pink stuff in the corner that looks like Jell-O but smells too much like fish to be a dessert, plus dozens of other things that I didn’t want to miss but had absolutely no idea what they were. Aren’t there supposed to be labels? Who stole the labels? My plate was overflowing, elbows bruised from jockeying the buffet line, and eyes glazed from a dazzling and fearful array of concoctions just waiting to attack my body and soul in untold ways. Exciting and invigorating? Yes. But indigestion lay waiting on the horizon.

As a teacher and researcher, I felt responsible for digesting the whole array and pre-packaging it for the group. After all, wasn’t I writing a dissertation on the topic and supposed to be an emerging expert? But, how could I possibly identify, access, absorb,
and then teach the children’s literature of an entire country as large and prolific as
Australia? As my stomach churned yet another acid-laden flip, I reminded myself of the
need to let the participants look, touch, taste, smell, and feel on their own. Their literary
experience needed to be their own exploration, not just a regurgitated version of mine.
They needed to go through the smorgasbord line as well, filling their plates as they
choose. For this, too, was to be part of the experience.

And so it was that the next phase of our journey began: reading, thinking, talking,
and writing about what Australian children’s literature meant to six very different
individuals who live a half a world away. The first round of texts we encountered were
those available in the U.S. And, as noted earlier, within that first round the texts most
readily identified with Australia tended to be nonfiction: texts that addressed Australia—
and things Australian—as a subject matter. Students remarked in our class session that
these texts helped to provide basic facts and history about the country, including its social
and economic development. These texts—often located in the geography section of the
public library—were seen by the group as ones that might typically be used when doing a
class report on Australia. Several students admitted to only skimming or reading selected
parts of the books, seeing them more as reference materials.

As we reviewed and discussed the selection of nonfiction books the students
brought to class, I used the opportunity to introduce some elements of critical literacy to
our discussion. I wanted the students to not passively accept the information being
conveyed, but to take a more active stance as they read to question who, what, how, and
even why certain information is being presented. I saw this as a crucial time to help
explore Australian culture as a construct, not as a finite object to be catalogued and conveyed. I’ll discuss below a few in-depth examples to illustrate part of that dynamic.

**Images of Culture in Nonfiction**

Several in our group came across Kevin Davis’ (1999) *Look What Came from Australia* and brought copies of the text to class. Thematically, the book presents a range of inventions, crafts, animals, sports, and foods from Australia. Sprinkling Aussie slang and terminology throughout, the author warmly suggests: “So come along, mate, let’s take a trip to the land down under and see what comes from there!” (p. 4). The text is graphically active and engaging, while high-quality color photographs and eye-catching designs add to the stimulation. Two students remarked at how appealing they found it and suggested they would readily use it with a class.

A closer examination of the text reveals just how many concepts and images of a culture can be packed into one simple example. The front cover depicts an Aboriginal man in ceremonial paint playing the didgeridoo. The background is an arid desert with the distinctive red outlines of Ayres Rock. A painted boomerang adorns the upper right corner while a kangaroo is leaping onto the page in the lower right. Flipping through the thirty two page book, we see pictures of Aboriginals crafting didgeridoos; other scenes show a trio of koala, wombat and kangaroo with their adoring babies, plus more exotic animals such as the Tasmanian devil and the spiny anteater. Sparkling blue pictures of the coral reef and a peaceful sea turtle migration contrast with the bright green fields of a Tasmanian sheep station, complete with a passive but slightly indignant sheep caught
mid-sheer. Close-ups of shrimp on the barbie, a Kraft Vegemite jar, damper cooking on an open fire, a fruit-laden pavlova, and spongy lamingtons round out the food section. The sports section included a picture of a footie match, a surf-side life saving demonstration, and two swimmers using the crawl stroke, which we are told by the text was invented in Australia.

The overall tone and composition of the text is a celebration of the exotic, even stereotyped, images often identified with Australian culture. Moreover, we considered that this quality may actually be considered part of the book’s appeal: the back cover indicates that this is but one of many in a series of “look what came from” books for children. Looking more closely at the concepts being conveyed, we see that the text features predominantly rural images and an alluring outback filled with strange and unusual animals. As for the humans, we see rugged sheepherders, explorers, sportsman, a soldier, and Aboriginal craftsmen. With the exception of Queen Elizabeth II’s black and white image on a bit of Australian currency, not a single woman appears in any of the photographs.

Taken as a whole, what I find fascinating about this text is that it seems to echo the very images of Australia that the class brainstormed in our first session together: rural, outback, dry, dusty, filled with exotic animals, striking natural beauty, machismo, etc. However, from a critical theory perspective, this apparent correlation leaves me with more questions than it answers. The book was written and photographed by an American from Chicago who “loves to travel, and Australia is one of his favorite places” (p. 32). Would other texts about Australia written by cultural outsiders contain similar
stereotypes? How would Australians themselves feel about such depictions? As we continue with our literary feast, these are questions that both haunt and challenge.

More Tales of Nonfiction

A second example that produced some interesting critical discussion in our class session was Anne Sharp’s *Australia* (2003). The student who brought in the book for discussion introduced it as new, well-organized, quite informative, easy to read, appealing, etc. She said that she enjoyed reading through it and would use it as a reference for future classes. After her comments, I asked her to hold up the text and show the cover illustration to the group. The cover depicted a group of several children and adults in a campfire-like, outdoor setting. The youngest child, a girl of perhaps 3-4 years of age, is naked; the older girls and women wear a simple covering while the boy and man are bare from the waist up. One young boy in particular has a bloated, distended stomach possibly indicative of malnutrition. A white enamel coffee cup was strangely centered in the photograph and seemed out of place.

This is what I saw in the cover photograph, but what would the students see? I asked, “Just by looking at the cover, what does this tell us about these people? As ‘Americans’ what are some of the thoughts that come to mind about them?” The group was quiet, probably tentative with their own conclusions and sensing that I had a strong opinion to share. I suggested how, at least to me, the illustration presented a stereotypically “primitive” view of a people. I related it to our discussion earlier that day about views of culture and civilization, arguing how it perpetuated Lewis Morgan’s
hierarchical view of human development (Kohls, 2001). Why was the white coffee cup there—the only obvious marker of western civilization in the photograph? It was in the center of the group of people, thus the composition of the photograph really struck me. The stark, white, manmade, artificial quality of the white cup contrasted eerily with the natural setting and simple, nature-oriented lifestyle being depicted.

We then looked quickly through the photos and illustrations of the text. The majority of the photos shared a similar quality, depicting more traditional aspects of Aboriginal life and culture. Many of the photos were taken in remote settings and depicted hunter/gatherer-type scenes. These images echoed, perhaps even reinforced, some of the class’s preconceived notions of Australian wilderness and of Aboriginal peoples themselves. Real Aborigines—those who are worthy of photographs and of having books written about them—represent a primitive people who engage in traditional activities, wear ceremonial paint, and blend in seamlessly with the exotic wildlife of the ever-present outback.

Our discussion of Australia pointed out another dimension to the photographs and composition of the text. It was only toward the very end of the book that we noticed more urban scenes with the people wearing western-style dress. Why show only a few such “modern” images, and only at the end? I suggested that the sequencing of the pictures has meaning here, whether intentional or not. To me, it implies a developmental aspect, moving from remote bush to the urban and western—again, reinforcing Morgan’s hierarchical view of civilization and causing us to consider Aborigines as a primitive people awaiting development.
I tied our critique of *Australia* to critical literacy and attempted to problematize the text for the group. I used it as a springboard to stir questions about people, representation, power, authorship, and the like. We looked closer at the text to find more clues about the perspective from which this text was written and produced. Most noticeably, the book was part of a series of “Indigenous Peoples of the World” published by Lucent Books of California. In the end notes, the author is described as a “freelance journalist and historian” living in Ohio. Nothing was mentioned about the author’s travel to or research in Australia, or with indigenous populations. So, our class was left to wonder about the author’s credentials and the book’s cultural authenticity. We judged it as a book written and produced by cultural outsiders for cultural outsiders, doubting whether it would ever be sold or read in Australia.

Our class discussion ended there, but later I took a closer look at the text itself to get a feel for the narrative style. I judged it as being a traditional textbook format written in the third person. The tone was authoritative with the author adopting a rather scientific, objective position. The people and culture under discussion were treated as objects of study with the author switching between the referent Aboriginal and the rather disturbing term “native.” A number of generalities were offered about the culture and people, perhaps in an attempt to help package and explain this “other” to outsiders such as ourselves. The following quote from the family and community life chapter offers a quick example of the tone and style in this text: “The Aborigines are a very musical people. In addition to learning the songs of their Dreaming Tracks, the natives also use a wide variety of musical instruments” (p. 41).
The point of view in *Australia* was clearly from a western, outsider perspective exploring the strange and exotic “other” world of Aboriginal culture. The western frame of reference is subtly woven throughout the text, serving at times as a standard against which the Other is both understood and judged. For example, the author offers the following description of Aboriginal culture: “Until relatively recently they did not grow crops, use metals, or make pottery. They built no towns or roads, had no written language, and maintained extensive trading networks without benefit of wheeled equipment or vehicles” (p. 8). Through this passage, Aboriginal life is categorized more in its difference from the known western world, with qualities of the Other framed in a deficit model. As the next quote illustrates, even attempts at praising aspects of Aboriginal culture can hark back to the empire building of earlier centuries and harbor a distinctively patronizing tone: “This primitive lifestyle blinded Europeans to the rich culture the Aborigines had developed” (p. 8).

Application of critical theory to an analysis of *Australia* helped to illustrate how influential point of view and style can be in the presentation of cultural material in nonfiction. For both *Australia* and the much shorter and graphically intense *Look What Came from Australia*, selection of what images and ideas to include, as well as composition of those images, had significant impact on the understandings we drew. These two examples help to illustrate how texts we might once have considered to be inert and static are actually quite dynamic, actively telling stories and weaving tales in the world of nonfiction. But, even this brief analysis and discussion started to pose a real problem for me as a researcher.
On one hand, both the explicit and implicit stories that *Australia* and *Look What Came from Australia* conveyed to our group tended to support and extend many of our preconceived notions. On the other hand, the students and I had radically different responses to the same nonfiction texts. The students seem to be focused around facts, figures, and tangible knowledge they felt the text provided. My perspective, however, focused on critical theory, philosophical play with the postmodern mantra “the medium is the message,” and concern over hidden meanings that supposedly neutral, objective texts would impart. Already, with just these two simple examples, I was sensing immense difficulty in answering my first question: For cultural outsiders reading Australian children’s literature, what images, concepts, ideas, and stories are evoked? I was also realizing how my question itself didn’t seem to account for what the reader him/herself brings to the literary transaction.

The tension between our radically different reading experiences points to a central theme that would emerge again and again throughout this study. Namely, who we are, what experiences we have had, and what sensitivities we have developed all dramatically influence how we view a text and what meanings we draw from it. There would be not one answer to my research questions, but many. I would tread a fine line, then, between two demons of qualitative research: one urging me to make generalizations that belie individual experience, and another drawing me into a black hole of meaningless relativity.
On the Lighter Side: Wombat Diaries and Missing Bums

Let’s face it, deep literary analysis can be tiring; critical theory a bit depressing. I did not want our literary experience to be daunting and negative, so I sought to include a balance of texts, both serious and lighthearted. I also felt this would help our selections to be more representative of those texts that would actually engage and entertain their primary audience: children. Thus, our pre-departure readings weren’t all “heavy” choices, overanalyzed through discussion and journal assignments. Woven into that reading experience were still points of consideration and analysis, but some were “off the wall” and just plain fun.

During my scouting trip to Australia in March, I was introduced to *Diary of a Wombat* by the author and illustrator, Bruce Whatley. We met at an informal signing he was doing at Books Illustrated, a Melbourne children’s bookstore and educational center run by noted children’s book author and illustrator Ann James and her partner, Anne Haddon. We chatted for over an hour about my research, his work both in the U.S. and Australia, and children’s literature in general. He shared that *Diary of a Wombat* was one of his favorite projects because of the humor and its play with perspective. It is a simple story, told in diary form through the first-person perspective of a pet wombat living with a middle-class Australian family. But, Whatley also shared his earlier frustration that U.S. publishers rejected the text, claiming that American audiences wouldn’t know what a “wombat” was, or perhaps even care. The book was released in Australia with great success. After seeing that success overseas, Whatley’s American publisher changed its position and decided to take the risk. At the time of our chat, *Diary of a Wombat* was
scheduled for release in the U.S. later that year. Needless to say, I snatched up an
Australian copy on the spot, secured Whatley’s signature, and shepherded the treasured
copy back to the states.

I shared this story with my group. In addition to finding *Diary of a Wombat* an
interesting example of the power and dynamics of international publishing, we found it
tremendously funny. Its dry sense of humor and raw, unabashed exploration of life
through the eyes of a wombat made the book a favorite with our group. Time and again,
participants said, “That was my favorite!” Rising to the challenge of whether American
audiences would understand or enjoy the book, one of the participants used the copy with
a class of second graders. Not only did her students quickly learn what a wombat was
through simple pre-reading activities, but they found the story captivating and funny.
The book, and the wombat figure itself, became somewhat of a symbol for our group.

I was introduced to a second text on my scouting trip that became a source of both
insight and humor. I met with John Stephens, a senior member of the faculty at
Macquarie University and a noted Australian scholar on children’s literature. I was
introduced to Stephens in England at the 2001 Children’s Literature International
Summer School sponsored by the University of Roehampton, Surrey. Stephens was
generous in helping me during my planning trip to Australia and offered a number of
suggestions. In particular, he recommended *The Day My Bum Went Psycho* (2001), by
Andy Griffiths. He said, “You’ve got to read this! It’s hysterical.” John quickly
cautioned that Griffiths’ work is not usually the focus of serious critique in the academy,
but suggested that it is wildly funny and indicative of what appeals to Australian teen
culture.

The Day My Bum Went Psycho is the epic saga of twelve year old Zack Freeman, a boy trying to save the world and reunite with his runaway “bum.” As the back cover explains, it is “A story of courage and endurance that takes Zack on a journey across the Great Windy Desert, through the Brown Forest and over the Sea of Bums before descending into the heart of an explosive bumcano to confront the biggest, ugliest and meanest bum of them all…” Age-appropriate humor relating to a host of bodily functions and an expansive bumcabulary worthy of its own glossary in the, dare I say, “rear” combine to weave a humorous, heartily irreverent, and utterly engaging adventure.

As with Diary of a Wombat, I shared The Day My Bum Went Psycho with the group. Its zany humor appealed to some more than others. Beyond that, though, we also were fascinated to compare the Australian edition to the U.S. edition, freshly released in April of 2003. We puzzled at the title change from “bum” to “butt,” a substitution that we found was made throughout the entire text of the story. Some of us, including me, felt that this simple word exchange had significant impact on our response to the story. We considered the term “bum” to hold more whimsical, humorous, even endearing qualities than the more mundane and utilitarian “butt.” Butt evoked immediate images of Bart Simpson and disciplinary directives; bum might be used by one’s grandmother after a glass of sherry, thus holding far more comic depth. The U.S. version lacked some of the wit and charm of the Australian.
The range of texts we were encountering was mushrooming, and with it the potential points of impact and meaning. The challenge of dealing with the wider world of fiction in Australian children’s literature—and the even wider range of responses that our group had to them—called for a different approach if I were to address my first research question meaningfully. I can, and will, discuss individual differences in response later, for that is an important part of our findings. But first, if I was to get any sense of the larger picture that emerged from the study, I needed some framework to conceptualize the range of materials we encountered, and the ways in which culture is represented in them.

A Conceptual Model of Cultural Relativity

The cultural chameleons haunted me. If we couldn’t identify anything uniquely Australian in them, do we just discard them from the study? Or, do we simply say that these examples show the similarities between Australia and the culture of our group? I feared that this would dichotomize our thinking into an “us” and “them” mentality, with the goal becoming to merely identify the things we saw as different and exotic in Australia. In some ways, that was exactly what Davis’ Look What Came from Australia did through his celebration of the exotic. My research questions demanded that I go deeper than a simple categorization of familiarity and difference. The cultural chameleons were my first major clue—perhaps even the first major research finding of this study. They were trying to show me something about the reflection of culture in
children’s literature. Following is how I learned to listen to the cultural chameleons, and to the unwritten stories that Australian children’s literature had to share.

The model evolved at the end of my research, as I was struggling to find connections and relationships among a wide range of Australian children’s literature that we reviewed. In keeping with the philosophy of grounded theory that guided my data analysis, the model literally emerged from the research process, from the data, and from my frustrations of trying to present the data to others. It is what evolved out of my attempt to put the pieces of a complex and confusing puzzle together in a meaningful way. I will describe first the overall structure of the model, then discuss in detail several examples of Australian children’s literature that help illustrate both the various dimensions of the model, as well as the way in which I see Australian culture itself reflected in that literature. It is both analysis and presentation in one.

The model seeks to illustrate the various degrees to which culture is perceived to be reflected in Australian children’s literature by establishing a hierarchy of cultural specificity. Books perceived to be least culturally specific, even universal in nature, are at one end of the spectrum, while books perceived to be most culturally specific are at the other end. The spectrum itself is divided into five groupings which reflect commonalities that texts in that level share. Going from least culturally specific to most culturally specific, group categories are: 1) Worldly Wonders; 2) Cultural Chameleons; 3) Common Stories, Uncommon Elements; 4) Special Stories for Special People, Places, or Things; 5) Songs of the Heart. To provide an overview, I illustrate the five types of texts in the
model, and their respective characteristics, below. Following the overview, I describe each type in more depth, along with texts that exemplify each category.

![Figure 9: Model of Cultural Relativity in Children’s Literature](image)

As for how texts are categorized, the five common literary elements of plot, theme, setting, characterization, and style are all central factors for consideration. In addition, other aspects of the text such as cover art, illustrations, biographical information on author and illustrator, as well as end notes can all be considered. I envision the model as an extension of reader response with the categories being more suggestive than definitive. So, rather than attempt to devise an objective, mathematical scheme for categorization, I offer that a holistic assessment that considers how all elements of the text work together is more useful. Furthermore, I acknowledge that different readers may suggest different categorizations for the same text. Rather than seeing that as a weakness...
of the model, I suggest that the model highlights the process whereby we construct meaning and helps to further discussion of cultural specificity. Following is a brief tour of the model with examples for each level.

**Worldly Wonders**

This category is seen as the most general, culturally non-specific type of text. The setting is distinctively global in nature, thus avoiding identification with any single culture. Unlike the cultural chameleons noted earlier, these texts are more removed and do not elicit the same kind of personal identification and familiarity. Themes are viewed as quite broad and all encompassing, perhaps even universal in nature. They are presented as applicable to all children, everywhere, and may include essential spirituality or a humanistic orientation. Characters are nondescript, or reflect all races. Point of view is omniscient and intending to convey truths about the world, either physical or social. Author is addressing the world’s children; tone may be familiar, but there is often a narrative distance between the author and reader.

Mem Fox’s *Whoever You Are* (1997), illustrated by Leslie Staub, is an excellent example of this category for fiction. The setting moves through a series of cities, towns, and villages presenting the reader with a literal tour around the globe. Some images are rather generic in western culture and show green pastoral fields with white, single-family homes dotting the landscape. Others scenes are a bit more culturally specific, with houses that have curved, swooping rooflines reminiscent of Indonesia, or thatched, round huts evoking images of a sub-Saharan Africa village. A range of skin tones, eye and
facial features, as well as colorful, “traditional” costuming, gives the appearance of several undefined ethnic and cultural groupings.

Although specific ethnic and cultural cues are quite evident throughout the illustrations, I suggest that they are merely representational and serve only to convey a vague, all-worldly sense. By contrast to the “any place” feel of cultural chameleons, there is a distinctly “every place” feel evocative of a global village; it is both no one’s and everyone’s at the same time.

The theme of Wherever You Are is similarly broad and all-worldly by challenging the reader to celebrate the essential humanity underlying all human beings, despite superficial differences. She writes, “Their lives may be different from yours, and their worlds may be very different from yours. But inside, their hearts are just like yours, whoever they are, wherever they are, all over the world” (unnumbered).

Point of view is omniscient third person, with the narrator depicted in the illustrations as a friendly, middle-aged adult male with light-brown skin tone. The dominant fabric of his hat and clothing is a sky-blue color with puffy, white clouds. The physical characterization of the narrator mimics and supports the somewhat preachy, even God-like tone of the narrative. Moreover, this paternalistic image is supported throughout the text as the narrator is shown hovering in the background, holding four ethnically diverse children securely in his embrace.

In Whoever You Are, Fox is writing not really as an Australian, but as a senior member of the global village for other, smaller and younger members of the global village needing moral and spiritual instruction. I suggest that all of the attributes
discussed above result in an intentional positioning of the text to the reader: didactic instruction in “universal” moral values. Moreover, this positioning had a distinctive resonance with participants in my study. I will return to these ideas later in this chapter, but now I would like to discuss a second example to help illustrate the category itself.

In the realm of nonfiction, Graeme Base’s *The Water Hole* can also be seen as a “worldly” book. Through highly detailed, realistic illustrations and short, declarative text, Base explores the lifecycle of both ponds and animals with a distinctly global feel. Base, himself, helps us see the text in this light through the author’s note in the end:

*The Water Hole* was inspired by a four-week sightseeing safari through Kenya and Tanzania. I had in mind a simple story about the cycle of seasons on the African plains, but the idea gradually expanded to embrace other countries and their wildlife, in the process giving the central image of the water hole a certain metaphorical significance—and, of course, providing me with the perfect excuse to draw lots of animals from other parts of the world as well. (unnumbered)

Animals such as tigers, toucans, pandas, and kangaroos are associated with key geographic regions and appeal to the reader through a sense of the exotic; the all-inclusive, broad scope of the setting and content make the book’s message feel universal. The impact of the shrinking water hole is felt through each of the animal species; however the omniscient narrative is distanced, all-knowing, and factual.

I initially considered both *Whoever You Are* and *The Water Hole* to be examples of cultural chameleons. They illustrate how texts may fail to reflect noticeably the cultural heritage of the author. However, as I looked more closely at these texts and considered the themes and relationship of author to reader, I sensed something different going on here. They met the basic criteria for cultural chameleons, yet they seemed to be
pointing to yet another level of differentiation. A closer look at the chameleons may help to illustrate some of the distinctions.

**Cultural Chameleons**

Texts in this category are rooted more in the human world of culture than those noted above, but they still belie any immediate identification with a unique cultural heritage. Their nondescript, western qualities of setting, theme, plot, style, etc. allow them to be adopted by readers of many such cultures, perhaps even with those readers seeing them as part and parcel of their own world. Through an approachable neutrality, the reader can see him/herself in the text with connections invited through familiarity and similarity. They offer one deeper level of cultural relativity than the worldly books because there is a feeling of some real, *specific* place that could be right around the corner. This is quite different from the “every place” sense of the Worldly books. I see it as a depiction of one place drawn from many, different possibilities rather than one depiction representing or modeling for all. Chameleons are some place, but not necessarily *every* place.

Mem Fox’s *Magic Hat*, illustrated by Tricia Tusa, provides an interesting example. The text begins, “One fine day, from out of town, and without any warning at all, there appeared a magic hat” (unnumbered). The reader is drawn into this undefined town to follow the brief, but exciting antics that unfold from the magic hat’s interaction with the characters who live there. The illustrations depict a park-like setting with glimpses of an urban center on the fringe. The characters have slight variance in skin
tone, but are otherwise nondescript. The overall sense is that the book offers a glimpse into an imaginative, but quite tangible world lying right around the corner.

Alison Lester’s *Magic Beach* offers another example. The story creatively tells of a day at the beach in two alternating dimensions: the concrete, physical aspects of the experience itself overlaid by a parallel, imaginative world of play inspired by the lived reality. The repetitive refrain, “At our beach, at our magic beach…,” introduces each physical description of the day’s events. Lester’s use of the possessive helps the reader to see the setting in personal terms; the beach in this story is not just any beach, it’s our beach, even *my* beach. The culturally nondescript setting, paired with the first person narrative helps promote this response by fostering identification.

Several of Bruce Whatley’s books address experiences common to households across many cultures: the joys and tribulations of pet ownership. *That Magnetic Dog* (1994) takes a humorous look at Skitty’s never-ending attraction to food. The only tell-tale sign that might identify the book as British or Australian is the single use of the word “Mum” in the written text. Also, Whatley and Smith’s *Little White Dogs Can’t Jump* (2001) has a similarly nondescript cultural heritage. Two small exceptions could be an illustration showing a right-hand-drive automobile and, as Bruce shared with me at a book signing in Melbourne, an overly visual glimpse at Smudge’s genitalia that caused the book’s rejection from the U.S. market. Skitty in *That Magnetic Dog* and Smudge in *Little White Dogs Can’t Jump* are clearly someone’s dogs, yet they could easily be dogs right down the street from the reader. They are specific dogs, not “all dogs,” and evoke a friendly, alluring appeal for the reader.
A Coat of Cats (1998), by Jeri Kroll and Ann James, addresses the more serious theme of displacing the elderly under the guise of progress and self protection. The kindly, but eccentric protagonist goes through a painful separation from her many cats when she is forced to relocate from her comfortable, old house to a new, safer “flat” on the other side of town. Although one could argue the cultural basis surrounding this treatment of elderly— isolation, no extended family support, government intervention and resources, spiritual ties to land, community development and progress—the story might float as a chameleon among many westernized cultures.

This sense of familiarity and immediacy was a key differentiation between cultural chameleons and the more general, worldly books. Also, closer narrative distance and more friendly tone lent a different quality to these books. Cultural chameleons may have been written by someone from a specific culture about things from a specific culture, but the text and illustrations diffuse the colors of cultural difference and lead to familiarity and identification across cultures. As the next category will illustrate, the reflection of culture in Australian children’s literature can be seen in a much different light.

Common Stories, Uncommon Elements

A number of books I reviewed had certain markers of Australian culture that seemed to reach out to the reader and say, “I’m Australian!” They may include books that have stereotypical Australian human or animal characters (bushmen, kangaroo, koala, emu, echidna), a clearly identified Australian setting (Sydney, the “outback,” great
barrier reef, Australian tin-roofed house with veranda), and/or language that reflects
Aussie phrasing or slang (mate, organize, Mum). Unlike the cultural chameleons, they
could easily be recognized as somehow related to Australia. However, the overall
impression is that culture is rather “skin deep” in these examples. Common themes
and/or familiar plots lead the reader to feel that—with the exception of the exotic
elements—the story could happen anywhere, in any culture. These books lack a deeper
reflection of culture and can even leave the sense that cultural and regional markers serve
more as marketing features than integrated elements of the story itself. The immediate,
simplistic representation of culture in these books makes them identifiable, but can fail to
satisfy on a deeper level of cultural analysis. We can almost think of them as cultural
chameleons dressed up in a souvenir Tee shirt from Australia. They project something
about Australia, but how Australian are they beneath the surface? Moreover, how much
would they really change if they took off the Australian T shirt and exchanged it for one
of another culture?

During my pre-program scouting trip, I was escorted through one of our host K-8
schools by an engaging, well-read middle school boy. As our conversation turned to
Australian culture, the media, and children’s literature, he made a rather insightful
comment: “Some people think all you have to do is throw a kangaroo, a koala, or the
outback in a story to make it Australian.” He referenced our earlier discussion of the
stock, “shot on location” U.S. comedies set in Australia such as “Sabrina the Teenage
Witch Down Under” and “Mary Kate and Ashley Down Under”—all films that seemed
popular with his age-set. Although he couldn’t quite put his finger on just how and what
made books or films truly Australian, his comments encouraged me to explore more
closely these Aussie wannabes. As a cultural insider, perhaps he was annoyed at some of
the loud and garish Tee shirts the chameleons were wearing. The following examples
help to illustrate this category in more depth.

Jean Chapman and Tony Oliver’s *Opera House Mouse* (1999) has a setting that
clearly says Sydney, Australia. The cover art depicts a mouse standing triumphantly on a
white peak whose silhouette readily suggests the distinctive shape of Sydney’s Opera
House; the mouse carries a climbing pick with a small Australian flag waving in the
breeze. Inside the book we see panoramic views of Sydney harbor, the famous harbor
bridge, and the Opera House; an advertising blimp clearly displays “Sydney” while a
helicopter tows a banner saying “G’day.”

Although the setting is unmistakably Australian, the story itself reflects a fairly
universal plot with the protagonist, Mouse, venturing forth from the familiar, safe
surroundings of home to explore the wider world. In this case, Mouse chooses to climb
the nearest mountain, which we learn is the Opera House above his home. The setting
gives the story a context while the gigantic white backdrop of the Opera House shell
makes the climb dramatic and visually interesting. The theme of leaving home to seek
adventure and self discovery is plainly identifiable, perhaps because of its prevalence in
the western literary tradition.

Reading *Opera House Mouse*, I was left with a sense of “common story,
uncommon setting.” More specifically, I felt that the same basic story could be easily
told in another geographic and cultural context. Cultural insiders may be drawn to the
sense of familiar in the Sydney setting; cultural outsiders may have dual responses of familiarity through theme, yet exotic and “other” through setting. With the exception of a more philosophical discussion on the universality of themes surrounding the quest cycle, the only significant aspect of cultural specificity in Opera House Mouse is the way in which insiders and outsiders relate to setting itself.

Several of Kate Ryan and Roland Harvey’s “Belvedere” series could also be seen as examples of this category. Belvedere is a loveable koala that has a host of escapades in a trio of picture books. As a koala, Belvedere himself evokes a strong regional affiliation by representing one of Australia’s most identifiable cultural markers. But, cultural specificity seems to end with the outward appearance of Belvedere; mundane plots, themes, and settings prevail. In Belvedere is Beached (2002), the reader experiences a typical outing to the beach, animal style. As with setting in Lester’s Magic Beach, the beach itself could be almost anywhere in the world. Similarly, in Belvedere Dreaming (2000) the reader encounters several exotic Aussie animals and the venerable gum tree as Belvedere seeks companionship for his long-awaited trip from the country to an undefined city. The inclusion of the koala symbol through Belvedere, and supporting Australian animals, makes the story one degree more culturally relative than Magic Beach. But, the overall effect is that of a cultural chameleon wearing a koala shirt.

Books that rewrite a well-known story in an Australian context can also have some qualities of a cultural “cut and paste.” For example, Colin Thiele’s The Australian Mother Goose (1992), illustrated by Wendy DePauw, reworks the familiar nursery rhymes to include exotic Australian animals and settings. Thiele’s artful and interesting
verse provides a creative revisioning of a classic that captures Aussie tone and style, but the depth of cultural specificity doesn’t extend much beyond the exotic qualities of (animal) character and setting.

Other examples in this category might include fictional series books that take a fairly superficial trip “down under.” For example, in *Fire Rocket* (Dixon, 1978), the Hardy Boys search for a missing scientist in Australia; in *Danger Down Under* (Keene, 1995), Nancy Drew joins the sleuthing Hardys to help an Aboriginal “friend” solve the mystery of a stolen tribal artifact. Stock characters and serial plot lines seem to drive the texts with varying success while cultural markers add spice with a new setting.

**Special Stories for Special People, Places, and Things**

The next category takes cultural relativity to a new dimension by integrating more closely aspects of character, setting, plot, theme, style, and point of view with cultural context. They become stories that can not easily be separated from their cultural context, for the context itself plays an important role in the story. The range of texts I encountered that could fall into this category is quite broad, so perhaps the best way to illustrate the key dynamics is by example.

*Christmas in Australia* (1998) by John Williamson, illustrated by Glen Singleton, might at first glance be considered one of the Common Stories, Uncommon Elements noted above. It tells the brief, humorous story of a middle-class Australian family’s Christmas day celebration, and their raucous attempts to take a family photo. At one level, the plot and theme could be recreated easily through another family in another
cultural context. In fact, the idea could be expanded to include a whole “Christmas in…” series to provide for some interesting cross-cultural glimpses at holiday celebrations. At another level, though, both the illustrations and the textual elements work together in a much more culturally explicit way than the more general *Opera House Mouse* and *Belvedere* books.

The setting is a rural Australian home and backyard on Christmas day. The opening scene shows the family decorating a “native pine” Christmas tree. But, the floor fan is set on high and blows the garland, reminding the reader of the season’s heat and, perhaps, of the odd juxtaposition of English customs reenacted in Australia. Williamson includes several Aussie terms such as a “fairy” on top of the tree and the distinctive combination pick-up/SUV termed a “ute.” The following lines illustrate both distinctive language, as well as a slight wink toward sex role stereotypes:

Oh, yum yum, pig’s bum—Christmas pudding.
All the ladies do the cooking.
All the men are really slack,
Slapping each other on the back. (unnumbered)

Visually, the same scene depicts several glasses of beer, perhaps with one of the high-school age characters drinking some. A game of cricket and Aussie bush animals round out the Australian motifs.

Although some Australians may judge these characterizations as stereotypical or even offensive, Williamson *does* offer a more culturally relative picture book that integrates both text and illustrations in its depictions. This example is helpful to illustrate a deeper degree of depiction while inviting discussion on the merits and authenticity of the actual depictions themselves. Although I wouldn’t judge the book as noteworthy
from a strictly literary perspective, it is quite intriguing from a cross-cultural perspective. The inclusion of a CD enables a sing-a-long to the text, helping cultural outsiders gain a sense of the rhythms and intonation of the language.

Graeme Base’s *My Grandma Lived in Gooligulch* (1990) offers another example that illustrates integration of narrative, art, and cultural context. This fanciful verse, coupled with vividly detailed illustrations, shares a reminiscence of an elderly, eccentric woman named “Grandma” who lived in rural and remote Gooligulch, population thirty-two. In fact, Base piques the reader’s interest in this wise, well-weathered widow by noting: “For Gran it was that made old Gooli’/Famous far and wide” (unnumbered). Although drawing on the familiar “Australian animal” theme, the book goes beyond merely showcasing the exotic to incorporate important human dimensions. Grandma seems to embody the spirit of independence, adventure, self sufficiency, and resourcefulness—traits I gather would be valuable as a settler in the outback. She has an easy, flowing relationship with a cast of wild creatures, even riding the back of a pelican for her last adventure to the sea.

Although perhaps similar “grandmas” could exist in other cultural contexts, Base offers us a genuinely Australian iteration that stems perfectly from a richly detailed setting and history. Unlike the chameleons noted earlier, the synopsis on the front endflap of my U.S. version of this book draws attention to Base’s Australian heritage and helps position it as a story *about* Australia:

This charming tale has all the elements that have made Graeme Base’s books so popular: colorful illustrations, catchy, rhyming verse, and something for children to learn about as well – the native Australian animals and birds, most of which are unseen on American shores.
As a final point of note, it is interesting to see that the rural setting, exotic animals, and rugged individualism found in *My Grandma Lived in Gooligulch* echoed many of the group’s preconceived notions of Australia mentioned earlier.

I also placed several works of folklore in the category “Special Stories.” Australian folklorist A. B. Paterson’s *Waltzing Matilda* (1970), illustrated by Desmond Digby, captures the tension between a free spirited, sheep-poaching swagman (vagrant) and a moneyed squatter (gentrified land holder). Drowning himself to escape the law and confinement in jail, the swagman’s spirit lingers on today: “And his ghost may be heard as it sings in the billabong, ‘Who’ll come a-waltzing Matilda with me?’”  The reader’s sympathy resides more with the swagman, perhaps in subtle admiration of the hardships that many early convicts and settlers endured coupled with respect for a deeper law of survival in the bush.

For cultural outsiders, presenting this well-known Australian poem/song as a picture book helped to explain in context both a plot that is unfamiliar, as well as a host of confusing Aussie words (billabong, billy, coolabah tree, jumbuck, swagman). The poem/song speaks to Australian pride in negotiating the outback, self-reliance, freedom-of-spirit, and the like. As with Base’s tale of the near-mythical Grandma from Gooligulch, *Waltzing Matilda* is rooted in Australian history and makes little sense outside of the cultural context from which it stems. It shares a further similarity by reinforcing some of our group’s preconceived notions of Australian culture noted above.
Songs from the Heart

The last and most culturally specific category I identified can be seen as flowing naturally and directly from “Special Stories.” I view them as narratives that reflect a rich understanding of culture and its interplay in the world around us. They go well beyond any surface markers of culture noted earlier (landmarks, exotic animals, slang phrases, dress, food, etc.) and reach for aspects of deep culture that influence the way we see ourselves, others, and the world. They can be powerful, provocative, inspiring, and informative, sharing songs from the heart of life and of lived experience.

John Marsden and Shaun Tan’s The Rabbits (1998) fits beautifully in this category. Through edgy, surrealistic images and haunting verse, they provide a deeply moving allegory of European invasion from an Aboriginal perspective. The tone of the story reflects a wise and worldly elder sharing untold truths with the next generation:

The rabbits came many grandparents ago. At first we didn’t know what to think. They looked a bit like us. There weren’t many of them. Some were friendly. (unnumbered)

The story ends by depicting a sad reality of the past blended with challenge for the future:

Rabbits, rabbits, rabbits. Millions and millions of rabbits. Everywhere we look there are rabbits. The land is bare and brown and the wind blows empty across the plains. Where is the rich, dark earth, brown and moist? Where is the smell of rain dripping from gum trees? Where are the great billabongs, alive with long-legged birds? Who will save us from the rabbits? (unnumbered)

The narrator is sharing stories of his past, his people, and his culture with an unspoken belief that understanding the past is an essential part of facing the future. There is a strong sense of connection between the teller and the tale, lending close narrative distance.
The story itself is one of cultural conflict, of two worlds colliding. And unlike the books noted earlier, it speaks not of exotic animals, entertaining adventures in the bush, admirable but eccentric characters, blithely imaginative outings in the park, or dreams of a global village. Rather, it challenges the reader to explore issues of power, domination, justice, science and spirituality—all aspects of deep culture that are woven throughout the fabrics of life.

A second example in this category is Melinda Marchetta’s *Looking for Alibrandi* (1992). This young adult novel tells the story of Josephine Alibrandi, a girl whose Italian heritage and single parent household place her at odds with the more conservative, mainstream culture surrounding her. As readers, we learn of classicism and hierarchy among European heritages, and of what it is like to be an outsider, a Wog, in modern Australian society. I learned through academic colleagues in Australia that this novel was heralded as one of the first, genuine voices to rise from a new sense of multiculturalism in Australia that was accepted, even embraced, by the wider majority. As with *The Rabbits*, it is a story that grew directly and intimately from a lived experience that made the realities of cultural difference impossible to ignore. I will return to this novel later, for many in our group commented insightfully on how this novel helped challenge their ideas of Australia and prepare them for a multicultural experience. For now, I raise it as an example that addresses deeply, and effectively, issues of culture.

A third example is Morris Gleitzman’s *Two Weeks with the Queen* (1989) that tells the powerful story of a young Australian boy sent to Britain to shield him from the
pain of watching his brother die of cancer. By removing Colin, the protagonist, from his home culture in Australia and transplanting him to London, Gleitzman is able to highlight creatively some amusing differences between British and Australian cultures. Colin seems to represent the “little Aussie battler,” willing to take on a staid and ineffective bureaucracy with endless optimism; egalitarianism, disregard for pretension, raw honesty, and respect for essential humanity are all themes that emerge naturally through a “fish out of water” plot structure.

The cultural contrasts show through magnificently, particularly for me as an American reader witnessing the interactions between an Aussie and his British “cousins.” The frontispiece informs us that Gleitzman grew up in England, then moved to Australia at the age of sixteen. So, perhaps the author’s own experience in crossing cultures adds to the authenticity of his voice and characterization.

As I illustrated above, texts categorized as “Songs from the Heart” can easily be seen as reflecting deep culture. They are the most personal, culturally sensitive, and culturally specific works. However, might these most personal and specific texts also lead the reader ultimately to consider broader, more universal values and ideals? And likewise, might texts that attempt to represent the broadest, most universal values actually lead the reader to the most specific? To help visualize these connections, I suggest that we return to the overall model of cultural relativity. Rather than conceive of it as a one dimensional continuum, it may be more useful to consider either extreme as a circle that feeds back upon itself:
This modified conceptualization helps connect texts that might, at first glance, appear to have little to do with one another. I will return to these ideas, and implications of the overall model, in the final chapter. For now, I will continue with the presentation of the data itself, and a discussion of how children’s literature influenced the program and our cross cultural exploration.

**Literature as Bridge Between Cultures**

The model of cultural relativity that emerged was an important part of the answer to question one of my study. It provides a framework for conceptualizing the range of images, concepts, and ideas of Australian culture that emerged when we, a group of
cultural outsiders, engaged with Australian children’s literature. Moreover, it is that very framework that helps explain how literature can bridge American and Australian cultures. I see three key ways in which that bridging occurred. First, books categorized as Worldly or Cultural Chameleons help illustrate commonalities between the cultures. Recognizing them as such lets us begin to identify and explore those shared values. Next, books seen as merely exploiting “uncommon elements” invited a dialogue on cultural stereotyping. As illustrated throughout the discussions above, our group became quite attuned to dynamics surrounding the typical markers of Australian culture and struggled to find deeper connections to the culture. However, I also argued earlier that some of these books perpetuated and reinforced our preconceived stereotypes. Finally, books at the “special stories” or “songs from the heart” levels invited an exploration of deep culture of Australia through authors who wrote with a keen awareness of the impact of culture in life and history: *Looking for Alibrandi* was one key example noted that I will return to again shortly.

In question one, I also asked whether literary experience reinforced or challenged preconceived notions of Australian culture. The discussion earlier in this chapter of *Australia* and *Look What Came from Australia* illustrated how some texts we encountered can reinforce and extend our stereotypes if left unchallenged through critical theory. However, the unmediated literary experience alone also served to expand our visions. One participant noted in her pre-departure journal that “Before beginning the assigned readings, I thought that most Australians were rustic and mostly white. *Looking for Alibrandi* was a great help to me. It made me realize that Australia is diverse and teens
experience many of the same things as teens in the U.S.” That same participant
expanded on these thoughts in our final debriefing session: “Looking for Alibrandi…was
just great to give you an idea of what was going on [in Australia]. Up until that point, I
didn’t realize that there were big metropolitan cities in Australia. It kind of opened my
eyes.” Others agreed at the debriefing session and remarked at how the book helped
paint a modern, multicultural, urban environment that contrasted with the more prevalent
images of a wild, rural “Outback.”

The theme of exploring cultural diversity in Australia was an intentional
instructional decision on my part, and I seem to have succeeded to some degree. My
desire was to go beyond the mainstream Anglo culture projected in the media to explore a
multicultural Australia that has been struggling to emerge over the past few decades. As
I noted earlier, Looking for Alibrandi was one of the first young adult narratives written
from a minority perspective outside of the dominant Anglo, Northwestern European
mainstream, yet accepted and enjoyed in the wider Australian community. The novel
explored life through the eyes of Josephine Alibrandi, a seventeen year old girl born to a
teenage mother out of wedlock. Adding to Josephine’s position in society as an outsider
is her family’s Italian heritage. This ongoing, lived allegiance to the “Old World” was a
strong and pervasive aspect of Josephine’s family life that often set her apart as a cultural
minority from the larger social world around her. She felt different from the lighter
skinned, Irish-English-German-Scandinavian people around her who were seen as
culturally transparent: she was ethnic, a “Wog,” while others were merely Australian.
In my case, the book itself bridged cultures as it opened a discussion with academic colleagues on multicultural issues among various types of “white” Australians. This was an example of literature serving as common ground and catalyst for cultural dialogue, a theme I will return to when discussing the immersion experience itself. As I considered my own learning process throughout the project, I realized that before this encounter, and my subsequent reading of the novel, I was not aware of such intense multicultural dynamics. I was heartened to see that most, if not all, participants had the same reaction to the book. They, as did I, saw it as an incredible window into multicultural Australia. As I looked back over the transcript and my notes from our pre-departure meetings, I did not feel that I “oversold” the issue; this effect seemed to be driven by the power of the text. I do wonder, though, whether the recent popularity of the film “My Big Fat Greek Wedding” helped us to make comparisons to active “ethnic” communities in the U.S. and Australia. These works of fiction and film helped illustrate that white cultural identity in both the U.S. and Australia is far from homogenous. It was interesting to consider, though, that literature alone could have the powerful impact of challenging preconceived notions for the participants.

In our debriefing session, I specifically asked the group to consider just what role they felt the literature, alone, could have in bridging cultures. Our brainstormed list included the following:

- Helps to present facts and history
- Introduces “big picture” issues, main points
- Starts to paint a mental picture of the place, culture
- Provides sense of physical space
- Provides sense of language, idioms, expressions, and values
But, there concerns were raised as well. One participant in particular felt that literature can result in biased perspectives. She attributed this more to the Australian children’s literature we found in the U.S., perhaps to the stereotypical “uncommon elements” we tended to see in these works. With those materials, she was concerned that “all you would get would be kangaroos and koalas jumping around—and that’s the whole image of Australia….You’re not reading authentic Australian children’s literature from over there.” She saw more diversity and authenticity in the materials I imported from Australia.

To explore further the ideas of “literature as bridge,” I will shift the discussion to my second research question which asks how engagement with children’s literature can enriched the immersion experience. I will answer that question in two parts: first, through exploring its role as a pre-departure exercise to prepare for the program, and second, by examining its role during the immersion experience itself.

**Literature’s Role as a Pre-departure Exercise**

In our debriefing session, I specifically posed the following question to the group: How did literature help prepare you for the experience? This was a core research question for me. We had lived through the experience together, discussed and journaled throughout, and struggled individually to draw some larger conclusions from the experience as we prepared for the final meeting together. I posed the question to the group, then gave everyone (including me) time to write their comments on large post-it
notes, and then to place their notes on the board underneath the question. Each summarized their views as follows:

- It helps to give context to what you will see, hear, feel.
- Makes you aware of cultural atmosphere. Teaches you about acceptable and unacceptable topics.
- Took away some of the surprises. Provided a better understanding of what we were experiencing. Introduced ideas to explore while we were there.
- Literature gives a reader pre-departure thoughts, ideas, images, etc. It also allows for the reader to get a sense of the culture through Australian authors.
- Can see what you think you may experience; have an idea before you jump right in.
- Gives you some idea of how people live, what to expect, the way society feels about issues…what is a popular or everyday kind of thing.

These summaries support earlier comments made in journal entries. For example, one participant saw the literary experience—particularly *Looking for Alibrandi*—as helping prepare her for the lived experience overseas: “I think that literature has been helpful in introducing me to Australia and its culture. It gave me an idea of what to expect upon arriving, when otherwise I probably would have been shocked to see such a diverse population.” Another participant commented in her reflection that *Looking for Alibrandi* highlighted the “theme of double identity—living between two cultures. I would never have thought of the Italian-Australian population and their struggles before reading this book.” Other participants agreed on the impact of this book through our class discussions, but did not make such specific references in their journals. Overall, I felt that *Looking for Alibrandi* helped challenge and extend preconceived notions of a homogeneous Australian culture, replacing it with an expectation for more cultural diversity.
Similarly, the literature helped us explore and discuss differences in cultural norms between Australia and the U.S. In particular, the group seemed to feel that Australian children’s literature was more open about mentioning bodily functions, discussing sex, and using “curse” words. One participant concluded that Australian children’s literature is “much more liberal and multicultural than it is here in the states, or at least what I’ve been exposed to.” However, I think there was also variety among how the group felt about those norms. Some in the group were more conservative, while others more liberal.

We attempted to get a feeling for how to summarize those norms in our debriefing session. The following interchange helps illustrate the different perspectives at play:

Participant 1: “Some of it’s a little too…”
Participant 2: “I was going to say radical.”
Participant 1: “Well, no. It’s very liberal. Maybe it introduces topics too soon.”
Instructor: “Liberal. Too controversial for some U.S. standards?”
Participant 3: “For what our standards are. It is definitely pushing the boundaries”
Participant 1: “I can get away with Walter the Farting Dog”
Participant 3: “There, in funny places, I can’t even get away with it!”
Participant 1: “[participant name] can’t even handle that one!”

Throughout our reading experience, literature introduced topics to our group that made us question what we felt was appropriate for children. *Walter the Farting Dog* (Kotzwinkle, Murray, & Colman, 2001) was actually an American chameleon we discovered on the trip and initially thought it to be Australian. *Walter the Farting Dog* chronicles with wit, humor, and blatantly descriptive language one family’s struggle to deal with the persistent and oppressive flatulence of a beloved family pet. Through an unexpected twist of events, Walter’s noxious fumes become his most valued asset, making him the
hero that saves the day. This book, as well as several works by Australian authors Bruce Whatley, Andy Griffiths, and Morris Gleitzman, challenged conservative Midwestern values and provided a real, tangible focus through which to discuss cultural norms.

Getting a taste through the literature of what to expect overseas was a key theme that emerged in both writing and discussions. One participant saw the information—and experience—she was gaining through literature as a way to help prepare her emotionally for the experience. In her summary journal, she wrote: “Reading and discussing Australian literature was a good way to prepare us for the trip. It probably helped to lessen the ‘culture shock’ most people experience when traveling to a new country.” This relates to earlier comments of “knowing what to expect” and the more general goals of preparing for the trip overall.

I was intrigued by comments made regarding Playing Beatie Bow (Park, 1980), an historical fiction novel selected as a group reading before departure. The book uses time-slip as a literary device to transport fourteen-year-old Abigail back in time 100 years. Park draws heavily on Sydney as a setting for the novel, providing rich detail into the daily life and concerns of Australian settlers in the 1870s. As a reader, I reveled in the text and found it a fascinating way to learn about the history of white Australian settlement. Response from the participants was similar, although perhaps not quite so enthusiastic as mine. One participant noted in her reading journal that it was “confusing at times, with so many themes overlapping, but interesting at the same time. [It had] mature issues for young audiences: disease (scarlet fever), whore houses, mines, and terrible working and living conditions for children.” Another participant commented that
“Playing Beatie Bow helped me realize how new Australia is and that it was settled in much the same way as the U.S. It gave me a great deal of background information.”

I will return to Playing Beatie Bow in the following section when I address the lived experience itself. I scheduled a special guided tour of “The Rocks” in Sydney based on the book, affording an interesting comparison of the literary versus lived experience. As a pre-departure exercise, though, I think Playing Beatie Bow helped illustrate that fiction can convey considerable cultural information. This one text, plus countless other works of both fiction and nonfiction, provide incredible opportunity. How and to what degree individuals take advantage of those opportunities depends upon a number of variables. For our group, these factors included access to and availability of texts, time with which to engage with the texts, purpose for engaging with the text, strategies of engagement, plus individual interests and learning styles.

For instance, our final debriefing session brought out a fascinating difference in learning styles among the students. On participant routinely did more reading and research than was required for the course. In our pre-departure meetings, I noticed that she would pull out a thick, 2-3 inch binder stuffed with internet page print-outs, color copies of book covers, journal notes, maps, course handouts, and dozens of other items. I was amazed (even slightly envious!) at her organization, and the detail of her work. I also found notes in my researcher journal where I observed this participant to be quite anxious to begin the readings, even asking if she could read ahead before the seminar timeframe suggested. In our debriefing session, the conversation turned to how reading can be one small step in preparation for the bigger jump of the physical journey. This
participant seemed quite aware of her learning style and made the following comment: “I wouldn’t even think about making the big jump without doing the small jump first. I do it with everything. Buying a car, going someplace in the states. I look it up, check the weather.” She felt that she would do advance research and reading anyway, even if it were not part of a course requirement: “Well, like I said, I read books anyway because I wanted to know what we were doing and where we were going.”

However, other participants did not share that same approach. After hearing the above comment, one participant said: “I just go.” Without the course structure, she felt that she would not have done the reading. Another agreed: “I’m on the same page with [participant name]. I don’t do that stuff either. It’s not that I don’t want to. I want to do it all. I just don’t.” A fourth participant described herself as a “kinetic learner” in her summary journal. She was also a highly fluid writer, offering some of the most detailed and interesting journal comments. Despite her willingness to engage and critique the literature during the pre-departure phase, the literature was more “static” for her, coming to life through the overseas experience itself. The fifth participant was more reserved in her comments verbally; her written comments on the literature were detailed at times, but seemed to reflect a preference for more active, engaged learning that came with experience.

I also considered the pre-departure role of children’s literature from the perspective of instructor and study tour leader. First, it fit with my academic background, interests, and teaching experience. I was comfortable with, and excited about, using the medium. Second, from a more practical standpoint, it allowed me to introduce a wide
variety of topics, voices, and perspectives through various genres. As I consider just the
two hour picture book read-in alone, each participant was able to read at least twenty
texts in their entirety, and to glance at dozens more. Sheer reading volume was a benefit
of using children’s literature that could not be gained by using longer, adult works in our
limited timeframe. Third, the visual dimension of picture books like John Williamson’s
*Christmas in Australia*, Mem Fox’s *Possum Magic*, and Ann Sharp’s *Australia!* provided
an easy, natural gateway to discussing both cultural stereotypes and the physical setting
we were about to experience. These books were invaluable instructional tools for me.
Finally, although, or perhaps even because, our individual reading experiences varied at
times, the texts themselves served as a catalyst and common ground for discussion. This
would emerge as a key theme as we engaged with the overseas experience itself.

**Literature’s Role in Enriching Experience On-site**

During my years of managing and leading cross-cultural programs, I often
struggled with finding creative and effective ways to help participants physically,
socially, and cognitively bridge cultures. The feelings I have might be similar to those of
a chaperone and sponsor of a 5th grade school dance between an all-boys and an all-girls
private school. The fear: a deadly standoff with boys on the one side, girls on the other.
How can we help them to relate positively to one another in a short period of time
without being too artificial or forced? Some interactions might happen naturally; others
could as well, but would need some assistance. The need was for a catalyst to initiate
those interactions, as well as a common ground on which they could occur. For my
study, children’s literature often served that very role. To help illustrate how this occurred, I begin by discussing how children’s literature helped stir interaction and discussion among strangers.

**Breaking the Ice**

Our program schedule called for three days of immersion in an Australian elementary school. The schools welcomed us warmly and orchestrated a full day of meetings and activities. Specific class visits were finalized on the day of our arrival, so advance planning with the host teachers was not feasible. I knew that the participants would probably be ushered into a classroom and presented to the Australian students as “the visiting American teachers.” Curious eyes would bore into the participants like dozens of tiny headlights shining on unsuspecting deer just emerging from a dense forest. I’ve witnessed it before, and it’s not pretty.

I urged each participant to come on the trip prepared with a selection of American children’s books to use as “read alouds” for the classroom visits. In retrospect, I think this idea got commingled with the suggestion of leaving gift books for the host teachers. Several of the participants brought only longer books better suited for individual reading and adding to the host school’s library than for reading aloud. The group ended up sharing one participant’s choice, *The Bunyans* by Wood and Shannon (1996) and using it among the various classrooms. *The Bunyans* is a farcical extension of the Paul Bunyan saga depicting the exploits of the now-married Paul, his wife, and their two enormous children. The plot introduces geographic features of the U.S. such as Niagara Falls, the
Grand Canyon, and the Continental divide; the humorous elements provide interest and amusement.

One participant captured the essence of children’s literature as “ice breaker” in her journal comments, sensing its ability to engage quickly. She wrote: “At the very least, I think using literature is a great ice breaker. It is a way of making a connection with a group of people in a short amount of time.” Another participant elaborated on the dynamics that resulted from her classroom read aloud of *The Bunyans*. She said in her journal that “the literature we brought with us was a fantastic tool to open up a cultural discussion. The children we read *The Bunyans* to really seemed to enjoy it and asked us tons of questions about our country.”

That particular read aloud stirred questions about the U.S., the setting of *The Bunyans*. However, a third participant realized how the text made cultural discussion a true bridge, with traffic going in both directions. Her experience showed that *The Bunyans*, an American text, was also a catalyst for discussion about Australia. She wrote “another step that evolved from [using] *The Bunyans* book was the children telling us where they would take us if we were to travel to Australia with them.” Thus, reading *The Bunyans* was effective as a cultural ice breaker, stirring discussions of both the U.S. and Australia. The book itself was a cultural artifact from the U.S., a somewhat “exotic” element brought into the Australian classrooms by foreign visitors that helped engage the students and stimulate discussion.
In the next section, I will describe how literature can do more than merely break the ice. Under the right circumstances, it also helped reveal deeper aspects of culture that could go unnoticed by outsiders such as ourselves.

**Seeing New Connections, Finding Deeper Meanings**

For me, one of the most memorable aspects of the overseas experience happened quite by chance. There was a brief lull in the schedule at one of our school visits. I was waiting in the teacher’s room with two other participants when Gail Moncrieff, the school’s literacy coordinator, happened to strike up a conversation about using children’s literature and their literacy initiatives. She pulled out a copy of *Mulga Bill’s Bicycle* by A. B. Patterson (1973/2002), a picture book we saw being used in one of the classrooms for a creative writing assignment to explore various points of view. Moncrieff said that this text was a common favorite in Australian schools, and gave us a quick synopsis of the book. It is about Mulga Bill, a know-it-all city gent who decides to trade in his trusty old horse for one of the latest fads of the early 1900s: a bicycle. Dismissing the shopkeeper’s concerns about his ability to ride the cycle, Mulga Bill sets off confidently, then begins a fright-filled, out of control journey down a steep hill. The ride comes to an abrupt and unflattering end; Mulga Bill learns a lesson in humility and returns to the safety and comfort of his faithful old companion.

My understanding of the text as a cultural outsider would normally have stopped there. If I had—at that moment in time—been asked to place *Mulga Bill’s Bicycle* on the scale of cultural relativity developed earlier in this chapter, I would have placed it at level
three: common stories, uncommon elements. The plot itself appeared rather generic: a simple, out of control ride on a bicycle done for humor’s sake. Other than the illustrations depicting kangaroos, wallabies, and other Australian animals (the uncommon elements), I saw no other cultural connections to Australia. The story could just as easily be placed in another cultural context without altering my understanding or interpretation of it. Moncrieff, a cultural insider, helped me see otherwise.

Without much prompting, Moncrieff began by helping me understand the importance of the author and his work to Australian history. She told us that A. B. Paterson is a modern Australian folklorist who chronicled early settlement life from the early 1900s, writing numerous stories and poems including the Australian favorite Waltzing Matilda. Thus, his works are revered somewhat as modern classics. Moncrieff then explained why this particular book was a favorite. She tied Australia’s egalitarian values to the dynamics of a frontier settlement forced to incorporate immigrants of various classes, including present and former convicts. Life in early Australia was often hard at times; the struggle to survive hinged on resourcefulness and the need for local knowledge, leaving little use for pompous airs or former class distinctions. Moncrieff suggested that Mulga Bill represented the wealthy English gentry, newly arrived in Australia, who thought their money, status, and former knowledge from the old world were all that they needed in Australia. This arrogance was not only fatal at times, but deeply offensive to those who had already “made it.”

Moncrieff helped connect this ideal to Australian humor and explained how several Aussie sayings capture that spirit. Phrases such as “taking the Mickey out of
someone,” “sending you up,” and “cutting down tall poppies” all speak to an Australian
disdain for arrogance and feigned superiority. Through Moncrieff’s discussion of
cultural values, my understanding of *Mulga Bill’s Bicycle* changed. I no longer saw it as
a rather mundane story, easily transplantable to another culture. It was still a simple
story, but I now saw it as one that has deep roots in Australian history and sense of
humor. As a result of Moncrieff’s explanation of the cultural connections, I would now
place the text at a deeper level on the scale of cultural relativity.

*Mulga Bill’s Bicycle*, a picture book that can be read easily in just a few minutes,
served as the catalyst to spark a rich, meaningful discussion of Australian cultural values
and humor with Moncrieff. The entire discussion took no more than fifteen minutes, but
had incredible impact and meaning. The two students who were part of the conversation
with Moncrieff said, afterwards, that they found her comments interesting. They listened
quietly while I actively engaged with Moncrieff, asking questions and teasing out
meanings. But as a researcher and the group’s leader, I felt we hit research gold and was
ecstatic! For me, the book became symbolic of reader response, the different
constructions of meaning that can occur when crossing cultures, and our project as a
whole.

This one brief interaction was an invitation to live through the theory I had been
reading. As Beach (1993) suggests, we saw first-hand how “readers’ cultural practices of
identifying with a character reflect their cultural attitudes and values of certain groups”
(p. 126). Moreover, the distinct difference in responses between “Australian” and
“American” readers sheds light on authorial intention and, as Eagleton (1983) asserts, the
“wider social relations between writers and readers” (in Cai, 1997, p. 203). Patterson was intentionally telling a subtle story about Australian history—winking at the reader through humor. These messages were lost to us as cultural outsiders because of “discrepancies between the author’s and reader’s beliefs, assumptions, and values (as frequently happens in reading multicultural literature)” (Cai, 1997, p. 203).

I also realized that the different level of engagement that I and the two students had with Moncrieff reflected, among other things, our different backgrounds, academic history, level of interest, research goals, and readiness to articulate cross-cultural dynamics. Catalysts can not work in a vacuum; the role of facilitator is still important, plus time may be needed for the catalysts to take effect. Again, we were living through virtually all aspects of reader response theories: textual, experiential, psychological, social, and cultural (Beach, 1993). It was fascinating.

We shared the Mulga Bill’s Bicycle discussion with the rest of the group, and returned to it again and again throughout our time together. In our final debriefing session, we talked about the interplay between the literary and lived experiences. One of the participants who was at the initial discussion with Moncrieff expressed how the discussion over Mulga Bill held meaning for her: “Yeah, that Mulga Bill’s Bicycle… Experience adds a whole new meaning to what you read. Before, it was just about a guy riding a bike. You go over there, you learn how it is more about their culture and what they really think of other people. It’s like two separate things.” This participant captured the essence of how we, as cultural outsiders, can gain entirely new perspectives on a text through experience, and the assistance of cultural insiders. I argue that children’s
literature was central to this process, and question how easily the same conclusions would have been drawn without an example like *Mulga Bill’s Bicycle* that served as both catalyst and common ground for the discussion. Perhaps the catalyst took a bit longer to work with this student than with me. But, her comments reflected that it did work in the end.

**Becoming Literary Ambassadors**

Before beginning this program, I knew that our point of inquiry which combined children’s literature, international experience, and pre-service teacher education was rather unique. As we lived through the experience itself, I continued to learn just how unique that focus was, and the special benefits that it brought for us as cultural sojourners. I would see time and again how our focus enabled access to scarce resources and enriched our overseas experience.

Juliet O’Conner, one of our guest speakers who specializes in social history through children’s literature, remarked at how few people seem to share that interest. She commented, “You came all the way from America to study Australian children’s literature? How wonderful!” I got the distinct sense that this shared interest in cultural exploration through children’s literature had the dual result of showing our appreciation for her professional work and inspiring her to meet enthusiastically with our group. Her resulting talk was a fascinating tour through more than 100 years of Australian history through its children’s literature, complete with a hands-on review of rare editions from their archives. One participant in particular gained much from the briefing:
Juliet O’Conner really gave me a grip on Australian literature. I learned its origin and progression over the years. I think this was helpful because it showed me literature’s place in Australian society. I can make my own decisions based on whether or not I find a piece of Australian literature good. However, without this experience I feel I would not have gotten a feel for what Australians like and the importance they feel for literature.

Others saw benefits from the briefing as well, but perhaps not to the same degree or with the same enthusiasm.

Through the generosity of the children’s literature communities in Melbourne and Sydney, we were introduced to dedicated teachers and scholars as well as to a fascinating array of authors and illustrators. This included a private briefing by author and illustrator Ann James, 2002 winner of the Dromkeen Award for outstanding contributions to Australian children’s literature, lunch with four authors who presented at a Booktalkers for Teenagers session at the Victoria State Library, a group dinner with seven noted writers for young adults, plus two private dinners and evening chats with Aboriginal author, storyteller, and educator Boori Monty Pryor in Cairns.

Like so many aspects of our experience, the degree to which we as individuals took advantage of and enjoyed these opportunities varied. For me, it was a rich combination of personal and professional interests yielding access to treasured souls who think deeply about children, education, society, and literature. At times during the trip—and even as I wrote this chapter—I wondered to what degree others on the program realized the uniqueness of those opportunities. In my researcher journal, I compared our program calendar to a three-week ice cream binge. After the first four double-dip sundaes, I wondered how special the fifth would taste. Were they having ice cream headaches? The following comments from participant journals helped me realize that I
wasn’t alone in appreciating the special opportunities that we enjoyed. Moreover, I now realize that it can be difficult to talk with your mouth full of ice cream. Sometimes you have to eat first, talk later.

Our evenings with Boori—a man of deep feeling with an amazing gift to engage others in a dialogue on racism, culture, and social justice—had special impact on the group. One participant captured the essence of that experience:

“For me, meeting Boori was the most influential part of the trip. I think he is an amazing man that has seen an unbelievable amount in his life….The first day that we went out to dinner with him, I was surprised that he touched on some of the topics that we had been discussing in seminar before dinner….I know that he has impacted my life and I wish him luck in his courage to keep trying to make things better in his country.”

Another participant commented, “It was absolutely fantastic having dinner with Boori….I loved the conversations about his books and why he chose to write with Meme McDonald.” Still another said “this was [an] absolutely fantastic opportunity. He is such a rich, intelligent individual who has a lot to say. He reminded me of a big teddy bear with a big heart. He is passionate and stern about what he has to say but does it in such a down to earth and informal way. No wonder he is wanted around the country to speak with children.”

Each of the artists and authors we met shared their own view of Australia, and the world, with us. Our experiences with those who created the books we read—some while we were still a half a world away—helped bring the literary experience to life. One participant commented beautifully on the impact of those meetings overall:

“Having met the authors allowed me to have a more in-depth and more personal experience both with the text as well as the world of creating and writing a book. Each author brought his or her own interest, ability, and unique style. I really
enjoyed this part of the trip not only because I picked up books I probably never would have, but because I got to meet the person behind the text on a more personal level. How many book lovers really get to do this?

Once again, I see that I was not alone in appreciating the unique value of this experience. She, as well as the others, was enjoying each and every scoop of ice cream in her own way.

As I chatted with educators at our host schools, they were often curious about the reasons for our visit, the trip, and our interest in children’s literature. When I described the itinerary, including the people with whom we were meeting, I often received a polite note of envy at the richness of our experience. They said, “I wish I could do the program!” and “What an author list! I can’t believe you’re having dinner with them.” In addition to the immense support provided by colleagues in Australia, I attributed our status as “foreign” visitors traveling thousands of miles to explore Australian children’s literature as a factor that enabled our access to scarce resources. We were somewhat of an oddity; authors expressed interest in discussing the state of children’s literature in the U.S., as well as opportunities to connect for possible speaking tours, or to promote their books to a wider market. In effect, we were literary ambassadors bridging worlds half a planet apart.

As ambassadors, our group also had the unexpected effect of promoting children’s literature among those we encountered in Australia. One student’s journal comment really helped me see this point. Two Australian hosts spent considerable time shepherding us around, providing wonderful sightseeing trips and endless conversation. We all knew the great benefits that we, the outsiders, were deriving from our time
together. But, after reading the following comment, I now see that perhaps we impacted their life in return: “I felt we gave something back to them by getting them even more interested in literature. I found [host name] buying books that she would probably never have. I think she might even have bought the infamous *Diary of a Wombat.*” Although my data do not provide support for a grander claim, I do wonder if our visit helped reinforce the importance and value of children’s literature for others as well.

**Providing Context, Comparing Literary and Lived Experience**

My discussion of the findings to this point has tended to emphasize what children’s literature brought to the overall experience. In particular, I have focused on various ways in which children’s literature served as catalyst and common ground for cultural exchange, helping to break the ice as well as to illustrate deeper connections to culture. For us, literature was the starting point that led into an incredible, action- and emotion-packed experience in the country itself. Literature was a gateway to experience and, at times, became co-mingled with the very experience itself. However, through class discussions, journal writings, and our final debriefing, we also struggled to step back from these rich interactions to help understand the dynamic. This strategic move helped me address my second research question that sought to compare the literary and lived experiences.

While all participants found connections to and benefits from the literature, they also saw powerful contrasts between the two types of experience: literary and lived. Our deep engagement with the literature, followed then by an intense immersion experience,
helped illustrate those contrasts. Through the following examples, I will describe the various ways in which our group identified and experienced those contrasts, as well as the complex interactions that resulted from their combination.

The following comment illustrates how literature provided a context for the lived experience that followed. However, it also illustrates how this participant saw the lived experience as far more dynamic by contrast:

There is no way literature can replace the actual lived experience. Nothing can compare to living an adventure first hand. The books gave us a good knowledge base, and helped to give understandings to many of the new experiences we had. However, nothing I read could have been as exciting as the “real thing.”

Another participant expressed similar feelings. Although she noted in her journal considerable benefits from the literature prior to departure, these meanings paled in comparison to those that emerged through the experience. Literature was still helpful as a context, but the experience itself became a catalyst for making literary connections: “I feel that I did not gain that much from reading the literature until after I had been there. As I went along in the trip things constantly triggered my mind to remember something I had read from one of the novels.”

Still another participant agreed. Although she still saw numerous benefits to cross-cultural literature in general, and her own experience with Australian children’s literature in particular, she felt that the literary-lived dynamic was heavily weighted toward experience. She noted in her journal that “the literary experiences didn’t really have much effect on my lived experience. I always try to keep open eyes and an open mind when experiencing something new.” However, first-hand experience was seen as adding a critical dimension to literary understandings:
The lived experience has truly affected my literary understandings. I want to go back and re-read some of the stories I read pre-departure. Since I have returned, I have read several of the books I purchased in Australia. The area might be described, street names might be given, train stations named, etc., and I recognize these. I can picture the actual physical location or setting in my mind from actually seeing it in person. It brings new meanings and understanding to the storyline.

Others agreed. One noted, “After being in Australia I want to go back and re-read some of the books from class. Playing Beatie Bow is especially rich in history and I think that I will pick up on more detail and the author’s meaning after taking the rocks tour.” Still another commented specifically on how the two elements of lived and literary experience were intertwined: “Literature has been helpful in introducing me to the culture, however you can really only have true meanings if you can be exposed both in the literary and lived moments.”

Interpersonal interactions emerged as the single most powerful element of the experience itself. I noted earlier some of the heart-felt comments about meeting the authors; other intense feelings were expressed by all participants about the many positive interactions they had overseas. The following comments help capture some of that dynamic:

I think that the one-on-one interactions that I have experienced throughout this trip really made it a learning experience. It is one thing to go to a country and look around and see things. It is another thing to be able to ask questions and have discussions with people who live in that country. The one-on-one experiences gave me a chance to find out what some Australians thought of their own literature, what they do for fun, how they celebrate holidays, and what working life is like.

A second observed that “through these interactions, we learned what everyday life is like. We didn’t’ learn too much of this from the books we read. I learned a lot about
Australian culture by the questions the students at both [schools] asked about U.S.
culture.” A third noted that “without the impact of meeting the various types of authors,
illustrators, teachers, students, [Melbourne hosts], the experience would not have been as
valuable. I think with any adventure of this type, key interactions with individuals within
the culture allow genuine and true experiences to take place.”

A fourth was quite attuned to her learning style, and the way she relates to the
world. She commented in her journal that “I thrive on the real experience and the
opportunity to talk and listen.” Interestingly, she suggested that the length of time spent
with our two Melbourne hosts had real benefit for her: “Compared to any other
informants we spent the most time with them, therefore allowing us to get to know their
personalities and learning about one another through casual conversations and building
from those conversations.” She also noted how interacting one-on-one helped enrich her
literary understandings: “I found the cultural informants to be the seal on the deal for me,
making the information that I learned through the literature come to life, making it
possible for me to really understand and relate to it. I think much of that has to do with
the fact that I am a kinetic learner.”

As I compared the participant experiences to my own, I noticed an interesting
difference. For all of us, literature was a context and catalyst, providing background
information, a unique focus, access to interesting people, etc. However, for them, the
main sensation was that experience tended to bring the literature alive. For me, the more
powerful feeling was really the other way around: literature helped bring the experience
alive. I felt this sensation a number of times throughout the program, but it was
particularly evident for me during our walking tour of The Rocks in Sydney. Perhaps what heightened this particular effect for me was that I made two trips to The Rocks. My first one was made during the March scouting trip to set up the program. This visit was somewhat rushed, and before I had read *Playing Beatie Bow*. The second trip was with the participants, accompanied by a private, professional walking tour guide well-versed in *Playing Beatie Bow*. In retrospect, I was amazed at how much I didn’t see when touring the area on my own, and before reading the novel. Like so many other times during this study, I became aware of how important background knowledge is to the understandings we draw, as well as the role that mediators play in facilitating those understandings. In the following paragraphs, I will describe a bit more about our visit to The Rocks to explore how literature and lived experience can have an amazing interaction when all of the right elements are present.

What makes an area like The Rocks so powerful as a setting for story? As one participant noted in her journal, “There are already stories in place from the true history of the area. Bringing bits and pieces of those stories into a new story gives connections and meaning to readers.” As we learned through our guided tour, Park worked diligently to remain true to the lived history of the region and imbued her novel with rich historical detail. She used character names that held significance and wove physical and sociocultural details of the period into her story to help the reader envision life as it could have been in Sydney during the late 1800s. These aspects include describing the shopkeeper’s housing and way of life through the eyes of Abigail, the time-slip heroine who travels back to 1870s Sydney. Along with Abigail, the reader of *Playing Beatie Bow*
learns how cramped living quarters were tucked above public trading space below, offering little privacy by today’s standards. Park captures the fragile sense of vulnerability that shadowed life in the early colonial days – particularly for the young and the poor for whom society offered little assistance. Danger, even death, lurked in every dark corner, giving grandmother good reason to warn Abigail not to go into the alley. This lived history of Sydney’s past made Abigail’s abduction and near internment into prostitution a realistic and believable plot turn, supported by and at the same time informing readers of the area’s history.

At one point in the tour, the guide stopped our small group and pointed to a shop on the corner. She said this building was probably similar to Mr. Bow’s sweet shop. I stared at the building while my mind instantly thought of the family, Abigail, copper caldrons of boiling sweets, grandmother, and Gibbie tucked away in the attic room. It was no longer just a building, but possibly the home of Abigail and the Bows. Our tour moved on and we passed the “Suez Canal.” Ah! Was that the alley where Abigail was abducted? Later, as we tasted freshly made hard candies, I wondered if these were like the ones that might have been made over 100 years ago by Mr. Bow.

While on site, I struggled to describe in my journal how the history and images I gained through reading Playing Beatie Bow played in my mind. I felt such a strong connection to the author, her sense of place, and her love of story. The following excerpt from my journal helps illustrate the mix of senses I was experiencing:
The Rocks. Deep historical connections layer onto a striking physical setting where land meets sea, providing an unusually rich source for writers to conjure vivid imagery. Virtual senses can see and hear a bustling 1870s harbor packed with boats, large and small, tall masts with billowing sails, rigging clinking, sailors shouting orders, the creek of timber and taught line, the snort of faithful horses as they strain to pull laden carts over winding cobbled streets. The smells of fresh hay, sea air, and roasting chestnuts mix with the unforgettable stench of animal carcasses rotting in the sun, piles of waste left fodder for rats, and open sewers carry all manner of debris to the harbor below.

These thoughts grew from my reading experience. Perhaps I was actively looking for connections to story and life. Perhaps my years of traveling the world, experiencing other people, places, and things as a cultural outsider made me crave new ways to draw meaning, to connect. Perhaps it was this study. Perhaps it was all of that, and more. I’m not sure. What I do know, though, is that for me, in this instance, story made the experience come to life, not the other way around.

Yet again, I was living through the theories of reader response, experiencing first-hand how all that we have experienced, all that we are, can impact the meanings we draw from both text and life itself.

**Helping Us Be Human**

There is much, much more that could be said about our time together overseas, and the ways in which children’s literature played into that experience. The participant journals, and our energetic debriefing session, confirmed that the participants gained as much, or even more, from the experience than I had hoped. As with life, research is an organic process that may not turn out exactly as you plan in the beginning. But, things do work out in the end. Our three week journey together, half a world away, had an
intensity that I never imagined. Should my years of work as an international educator have prepared me for all that I encountered? Maybe. But, so much of this was new to me, as well. It was my first, serious research project. A degree was riding on its outcome, and my own level of stress was running high. At times, my desire to engage the participants and tease out the most from the study competed with the participants’ desire to simply experience the program, to live for a time in Australia, and to be themselves.

The intensity of our time together played in my mind as I debated how to close this section of my data chapter. It was important that I answer fully research question number two: How can children’s literature help enrich the immersion experience for its participants? I had already addressed literature’s role as catalyst and common ground, as well as a number of other ways it enabled access to resources, provided a context for learning, and highlighted the comparative role that literary and lived experiences play in the understandings we make. There was still one piece of the story left that needed to be told. Step back in time and join us for a minute on the program, then I can explain. The van is crowded, but there is one more seat left, just for you. Squeeze in. It’s tight, watch your elbows. Buckled up? Ok, here we go.

It was the Sunday of our first week in Australia. We were near the end of a long day of sightseeing with our Melbourne hosts. Just before dinner, the group had dispersed to do a little independent shopping and wandering about. We agreed to meet back in a few hours. The younger folks spotted record stores, boutiques, and the like. I zeroed in on a large bookstore and settled in for a long graze on the children’s section. When we had gathered back together again and loaded into the van, we all began sharing our
purchases. When my turn came, I pulled out *Walter the Farting Dog*, the American chameleon I noted earlier. The mere mention of the title caused giggles, probably enhanced by the tight quarters of our van. I passed the book around, causing even more giggles; the illustrations were fantastic. Our Australian hosts seemed a little bemused as well, scratching their heads at a group of adults laughing over a children’s book. I’m sure they were thinking: Is this what they came to Australia to study?

Nothing would do but for us to share the whole story together, now, in the crowded van, bumping along the streets of Melbourne. So, I began an impromptu read aloud of *Walter the Farting Dog*. This short picture book treated our group to a hilarious discussion of Walter’s unfortunate flatulence, helping us end a busy day with tears of laughter. For me, it was a wonderful moment that helped me connect with the others—not as group leader or class instructor to student, but as one person to another. It was a time to be silly, to laugh, and to let loose. Together. It was a time to be human.

I learned that being both researcher and participant, practicing the ideals of participant observation recommended by Glesne (1999), is more difficult than imagined. I hope to remember Walter and the lessons he taught me in a crowded van. Next time around, I’ll try to laugh more, worry less. Thanks, Walter.

**How the DMIS Stole Christmas**

In the preceding chapters, I discussed how Bennett’s (1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) helped to both describe and explain the experience of culture, and cultural difference, by placing it in a six stage developmental
context. Moreover, I introduced the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) as an assessment tool that identifies an individual position on the scale, placing the respondent in one of the six stages of intercultural development: defense, denial, minimization, acceptance, adaptation, or integration. I then argued that the DMIS scale, and corresponding IDI ratings, would be a useful touchstone when interpreting the participants’ response to both cross-cultural literature and experience.

As I write this chapter, though, I realize how my perceptions of and feelings of responsibilities to my participants evolved over the course of our time together. Throughout the pages you have been reading, I have described a very intense, personal journey for both me and the participants. As I look back on my original research proposal and subsequent chapter on methodology, I sense an almost clinical tone that treats the participants more as subjects to be rated and assessed in terms of their “intercultural development.” But now, as I review in black and white the dozens of participant comments that I have woven into this document, I am reminded of how important their honesty was to me, to our experience together, and to my study itself. We were a very small group that shared, experienced, laughed, cried, debated, and even argued together. We talked of race and racism, thoughts of heaven and earth, and how we as individuals see ourselves in a wide and confusing world.

I now struggle to relate this intense, personal experience to the more clinical aspects of a formal model, and to an even more formal “score” on the IDI. Whereas once I might have been reporting scores of mere participants, I now feel like I would be sharing personal information on friends. Thus, I have elected to discuss the IDI results in
less detail than initially anticipated, and only as a group score. There was some variation among participant scores, but not significant enough to warrant treating them individually. Also, the pre- and post-program administrations of the IDI yielded some movement, but no significant group effect that can be reported.

When I looked back and related my administration and use of the IDI to my overall methodology, I realized my limitations in going beyond group generalities. I treated our seminar and project as a single, composite case study that did not attempt to individually chronicle the growth and change of each participant throughout the program. I cast the net widely, willfully introducing what I now see as an overwhelming number of variables. I sought to capture any and all effects, thus hoping to explore the potentialities of children’s literature, experience, and a combination of the two. Whereas I had no idea what, if any, effects I would find, I argue that such an approach was appropriate at this stage of my inquiry. However, this methodological strategy, compounded with researcher and participant fatigue, then tempered with a renewed respect for individual beliefs limit my ability to comment in this area.

As I will suggest in the closing chapter, exploring the connections between intercultural children’s literature and the DMIS is an area ripe for further research. I leave it to future study to explore more deeply the individual nuances of personal growth and change—or lack thereof—perhaps with fewer variable than I introduced in this project. To set the stage for that work, I illustrate below how the DMIS related to our experience.
Participant scores on the IDI were early to mid-way through the minimization scale, meaning that from a developmental perspective they had worked through Bennett’s (1993) first two ethnocentric stages of defense and denial. Consistent with the participants’ application essays and verbal comments about their excitement to participate in the program, the IDI scores indicated a low tendency to withdraw from cultural difference, or to view other cultures in a simple polarization of “us” and “them.” During the minimization stage, cultural difference is perceived, even welcomed, but seen as secondary to an underlying physical or transcendental universalism. Bennett captures the essence of world view at this stage through the following description:

> The stage of minimization represents a development beyond defense because, at this stage, cultural difference is overtly acknowledged and is not negatively evaluated, either explicitly as in the denigration form of defense or implicitly as in the superiority form. Rather, cultural difference is trivialized. Whereas differences are seen to exist, they are defined as relatively unimportant compared to the far more powerful dictates of cultural similarity. (p. 21)

Participant scores on the two subscales of the IDI minimization scale reflected varying degrees of a tendency to see others as “like us” and to apply personal cultural values to others, projecting them as “universals.”

As the scores on the IDI would predict, I found numerous instances where participants noticed some differences, but tended to experience Australian culture as just like home. Comments made throughout the trip, and later in journal reflections, included:

- “Kids in Australia are the same as the kids in the U.S. They think of the same things, go through the same phases, etc. They do use different language, though (damn, shit, etc.)”
- One participant reflected on her school observations: “This experience made me realize how similar kids are.”
“Meeting with the authors over lunch was interesting. I found these people are just like me—average, ordinary people who just happened to write some books.”

Another said, “It makes me feel good to see that we’re all the same.”

I related their ability to see similarities across cultures to a sense of finding “home away from home,” and to seeing a little bit of the Midwest in another place, half a world away.

This was a powerful effect for many in the group. Several of the participants wrote eloquently about the deep meanings they found in seeing universal similarities, and in connecting person to person. The intensity of their feelings, and the way they perceived the cross-cultural experience, really challenged my own thinking throughout our time together. I didn’t have the same reaction, or share the same feelings. I didn’t see the same things the participants did. Where they saw similarities, I saw differences.

In my journal, I wondered if I had become such a global nomad that I no longer had cultural roots. I became painfully aware of how different I was from the others. Although I realized that I was in a different place in both my educational career and my journey as a cross-cultural educator, it provided little solace. On the DMIS, I was struggling with issues of adaptation and integration; the others were reveling in universals that connected all of humanity.

During one of our seminar sessions in Cairns, I distinctly remember discussing the DMIS and challenging the group to consider whether universal values are absolute, or manifestations of culture. They argued passionately for universality, I the opposite. As I reflected back on that discussion, and the differences among our experiences overall, I struggled through a range of conflicting emotions. I questioned my faith and had pangs of longing for a time when Santa Claus was alive in both spirit and form. I felt like the
Grinch who stole Christmas, a heathen, and a heartless critic, all rolled up into one. The others read Mem Fox’s *Whoever You Are* and applauded its universal message; I critiqued its voice and tone, questioning the underlying values and insidious nature of such childhood propaganda. I had opened Pandora’s box, and it would be up to me to deal with the consequences. As I shall describe in the next section, all of this is part of becoming a global educator.

**Furthering Global Education through Literature and Experience**

My third research question addresses specifically the area of professional practice by asking how the study of children’s literature and international experience can support and further the goals of global education for pre-service teachers. In my literature review as well as methodology chapters, I placed this question at the top of a pyramid of inquiry and argued that it would be supported by each of the proceeding layers: international experience and children’s literature. Throughout this document, I argued extensively for the theoretical connections that support this position, making that case one step at a time. From a more practical, applied perspective, though, what did we find by actually living through the theory that built this program and study? To answer that question, I will address my findings with regard to each of the seven recommendations made by McFadden, Merryfield, and Barron (1997) for furthering global education with pre-service teachers. I paraphrased and adapted their recommendations (noted in more detail at the end of chapter two) as section headings to organize my findings. The following
discussion will review how children’s literature and international experience helped enact their pedagogical recommendations and further the larger goals they embody.

**Teaching Deep Culture and Valuing Diversity**

Earlier in this chapter, I discussed how children’s literature such as *The Rabbits*, *Looking for Alibrandi*, and *Two Weeks with the Queen* reflect deep culture. Moreover, I argued how engaging with certain of those texts—in particular *Looking for Alibrandi*—helped the participants themselves gain a deeper understanding of culture. By contrast, recognizing cultural tokenism and stereotyping in certain books helped highlight the absence of and need for those deeper reflections of culture. For example, books such as *Look What Came from Australia* and *Opera House Mouse* that I categorized as “Common Stories, Uncommon Elements” helped to serve that very role. More broadly, the model of cultural relativity that emerged from this study provided a framework to consider the various relationships of culture to literature overall, helping further discussion and clarify the potentialities of children’s literature in a study of deep culture.

Awareness of deep culture also translated into expectations for practice as a future teacher. The comments made in our debriefing session clearly indicated how the participants came to resist a surface approach to culture, seeking instead to find the deeper meanings and connections not only for themselves, but for their teaching as well.

The following story shared by a participant at our session helps illustrate that sensitivity:

I found myself talking to a teacher over at [nearby town]. She said, “Oh, I’m teaching an Aboriginal unit. Can I use some of your pictures and stuff?” And even right there, I was just like… “Wait! Please let me tell you some more things about it…” We’ve had this whole huge experience and we still don’t feel
completely comfortable [teaching] about any one part particular aspect of their culture. And then we have people here who have never even been there and who haven’t taken nearly as much time as we did…and they’re teaching kids about Aborigines.

The tone and context of this comment was not one of arrogance toward the other teacher, but one of concern for which aspects of culture teachers are sharing with their students, and how. For example, this participant worried that a teacher might simply show pictures of boomerangs, spear throwing, and ceremonial dancing we took at the Tjapukai Aboriginal Culture Center in Cairns, yet address none of what it really means to be an Aborigine in Australia—only brief stories of which we read and heard from cultural insiders. This participant indicated resistance to teaching superficial aspects of culture in favor of seeking the more meaningful aspects of deep culture.

I would also argue that sensitivity to cultural authenticity—noted in chapter two as a major concern for advocates of multicultural children’s literature and the foundation of my pyramid of inquiry—affects the selection of instructional materials needed to support the teaching of deep culture. As I described earlier, our pre-departure class seminar sessions were an opportunity to use critical theory and question the author, his/her credentials, and the authenticity of the work. The participants seem to have internalized this concept, remarking clearly in our debriefing session that authorial credentials and credibility were key criteria they would consider when selecting cross-cultural literature. For example, as we debated what we would look for in choosing cross-cultural literature, one participant applied these criteria with genuine discernment: “Credibility. You don’t want somebody who’s been over there [to the target culture] for
a week to come back and write a book. How often do they stay over there? What parts are they in?”

And finally, our struggle to engage with and value diversity highlighted an interesting and unexpected benefit of using children’s literature. Through both our reading and overseas experiences, we encountered stories of imperialism that depicted the effects of colonization, often relayed through powerful and intense indigenous voices speaking back to the forces of oppression. Two examples will help illustrate how although the content of two narratives may be similar, the style and form can result in dramatically different responses.

At the Tjapukai Aboriginal Culture Center in Cairns, the group watched a powerful documentary film that told Australian history from an Aboriginal perspective. European colonization was depicted as invasion with horrifying effects on an ancient people. Although some in our group enjoyed the film, finding it insightful and informative, others felt the film was quite offensive, causing them to withdraw. Discussion that evening got rather heated at times with various positions argued. In later journal comments, one participant helped capture how the film impacted her: “Equating their history with the atomic bomb just didn’t ‘cut it’ for me. It really set me off in a negative frame of mine.” Another wrote in her journal, “The first movie could have presented its information in a less offensive way.”

I compared participant response to this film with our pre-departure reading of The Rabbits, a picture book. The point of view was virtually identical to the film: both narratives were told from an indigenous perspective. The subject and themes were quite
similar: both depicted intense cultural conflict and the resulting decimation of an indigenous people by an aggressive outsider. The main difference I saw was that *The Rabbits* used fantasy and animal symbolism to convey the message while the film was presented as a documentary that depicted literally real people, places, and events. Also, there was a difference of intensity and degree to which the issues were addressed.

I struggled to understand how virtually all in the group embraced *The Rabbits* and thought they would use it with a future class, yet almost half of the group rejected the film. As an educator, I also struggled to reassess my own reactions. My initial response to the film was to revel in its artistry and judge it to be an ideal tool for cross cultural education. I even started to doubt whether such “lighter” treatments like *The Rabbits* were challenging the participants sufficiently, or going far enough to address the issues. In our debriefing session, we got to discuss both pieces and to compare our reactions outside of the emotional heat of the moment. The participants helped me realize a strength of *The Rabbits* that I almost missed.

Two of the students who were somewhat resistant to the film argued that the fantasy aspects of *The Rabbits* helped them to engage with such heated, emotional issues. One said, “I think it bridges, brings you into it.” Others agreed. She felt that the use of symbolism was effective, adding that “it really drives it home when you realize what they’re talking about.” Another concluded that the fantasy was engaging and appealing, making you “want to find out more about it.” Thus, their experience with *The Rabbits* illustrated that fantasy in children’s literature can be a gateway to the harsh realities of life and to issues of deeper culture, enabling cultural outsiders to access diverse thoughts.
and ideas by narrowing aesthetic distance and restriction (Soter, 1997). Of course, the
differences in response are complex and can be analyzed from any number of theoretical
perspectives. My point here is that children’s literature can have an unexpected potential
to further discussion on serious sociopolitical issues, engaging learners where more
confrontational materials may cause resistance.

**Raising Cultural Self-awareness**

One interesting outcome of the study was a heightened sensitivity to the relative
homogeneity of the participants’ home culture in the Midwest. At one host school in
Melbourne, Australia we learned that the school had twenty two different ethnic
backgrounds. At the debriefing session, the participants compared that diversity to their
local schools:

I was talking to a teacher at [nearby town] the other day – first grade. She said,
“We’re getting a Chinese student into the class” as if that’s huge news….I
remember going over there [to Melbourne] and there were tons of Chinese,
Vietnamese, Greek. All cultures. It was so funny, awkward, ironic, and all that
good stuff.

Another replied, “So many [of our] towns don’t have any Blacks, or Chinese. Nothing
but Whites.” The experience in Melbourne helped to highlight those contrasts of
diversity.

A number of participants commented on how reading *The Bunyans* to children in
Australia stirred questions about the U.S. that they couldn’t answer. One noted in her
journal that “after being hammered with questions about America, I feel it is important to
have a good general knowledge of where you live. It supports [the university’s]
obsession with general education courses.” Another commented in her journal that “I learned how little we, as Americans, truly know about our country. So many times I had to answer, ‘I don’t know’ or ‘I’m not sure,’ when the students asked me something about my own homeland.” Still another wrote, “I was surprised to find that I had some difficulty answering some of the questions they asked [about *The Bunyans*]. For example, I wasn’t real sure what state the Grand Canyon was in. How embarrassing! I was very pleased with how much we got to share about our country and how much the children shared with us.” Stepping outside of our culture to represent it helped illustrate just how we take our own culture, and knowledge of it, for granted.

The group also came to realize how differently ideas of a multicultural society are played out in Australia and the U.S. One participant captured this heightened sensitivity in our debriefing:

> One of the things, I can’t remember who said it over in Australia, but it kind of got to me. They said something like…up until about 1979, every time a new group came to Australia they tried to assimilate them. But after that, they decided that they were going to be a multicultural society and they didn’t try to make everybody what they think of as “Australian” or “British” or whatever. They can be their own person. Whereas in America, we’ve always assimilated everybody. You come over here, you main goal is to become “American.” You kind of lose your heritage.

The group tied these ideas to the goals of being more supportive of cultural diversity in the classroom, and encouraging “heritage exploration.” One participant joked about how little she knew of her German background and of the stereotypes that might be applied to her background: “Oh, great! So somebody [in my family] was a Nazi…or made bratwurst, or something! I feel so naïve about my heritage. I don’t feel like we carry on my tradition at all.” I related these feelings to a greater commitment to valuing diversity
and to raising awareness of one’s own cultural self. Our literary and lived experiences provided a context to explore our own culture, and to point out how much more we need to know.

**An Ongoing Learning Process**

The richness of our experience has not led to a false sense of being “experts” on Australia and Australian children’s literature. Rather, I think that for most of us it highlighted how much we still needed to learn, sparking even greater interest in learning about ourselves as cultural beings, Australia, other cultures, and the larger world around us. Participants expressed some disagreement over feelings of preparedness to teach culture, perhaps aware more keenly now than before of the breadth of content knowledge, as well as the depth of experience, needed to teach accurately and authentically. The following interchange helps illustrate how several of the participants now view teaching about culture:

Instructor: “Do you think that [your experience with Australian children’s literature and overseas experience] will transfer over to your comfort in talking about other cultures you haven’t been to?

Participant 1: “No” [Two other participants nodded agreement]

Participant 2: “I do think it will help me know how deep you really have to go into something to really get a feel for it. I don’t think I could pick up a book on China, read it, and teach a course on China. I think you really need to go deep.”

Participant 3: “I agree.”

Participant 1: “You can’t teach a course on China just because you went to Australia.”

Participant 2: “No. I’m saying that it makes me more aware of what I need to know to be able to teach it. Not that I would be able to teach it [now].

Participant 3: “[Made you aware of] the things to look for.”

Participant 2: “Right.”
I related this commitment to ongoing learning with a willingness to admit that we don’t know all the answers.

As we discussed our preparedness to teaching other cultures, we admitted that it was overwhelming at times because, as one participant noted, “there’s so much to learn.” Others agreed. Humility was clearly an outcome of the trip, for me as well as for the participants. Living through this experience helped illustrate the complexity of culture and how much there is to learn about so many cultures. As suggested in chapter one, I feel this sensitivity is a key factor in developing greater cross-cultural awareness.

As the following participant concluded, being honest with yourself and your students as you create a community of learners is the best way to move forward: “As a teacher, we can say ‘I don’t know, so let’s find out together.’ Or, how about ‘You research it and I’ll research it, and we’ll see what we find.’” As I type this comment, I realize how similar this view was to my own when we started the project. But, I think I learned as well that living through the ideals of “teacher as co-learner” can be more challenging than expected. Feelings of inadequacy and vulnerability threaten to erode one’s confidence; sharing control in the classroom has a ripple effect that can influence the entire equation in unexpected ways.

Identifying Inequities in Society and Education, Making Changes

This area was not one that the program impacted as much as some others. But, I do think there are some interesting ways that the study of international children’s literature can further this ideal. For example, sensitivity to cultural authenticity in
children’s literature then inspires a critical review of the production, supply, and availability of texts. This highlights which cultures, authors, and voices are available and which are absent in both our classrooms, and our society in general. The example of one participant helps illustrate the relevance.

At the debriefing session, one participant talked about a church mission trip to Jamaica she had just made. She specifically sought out local children’s literature and found very little. She did find a book by Jimmy Buffet and one written by a woman who worked at her hotel, but that was about all. We related this to problems of finding culturally authentic works to teach about Jamaica in the U.S. as well as to the challenges it would cause when trying to engage Jamaican children with culturally relevant materials, either in Jamaica or in the U.S. Exploring the dynamics of publishing children’s literature helped illustrate the inequities of culture and economics that impact our classrooms, both here and abroad.

Even in this brief study, our group began to recognize how culture is both reflected and refracted in literature. We saw koalas dance with chameleons, and “bums” changed to “butts.” We also saw how power and position influence the books that are available to us. We laughed through the Diary of a Wombat, and resented how this dear friend was almost denied her passport. Through all of these experiences, our group moved one step closer to understanding the limited perspectives available to us, and to challenge the seemingly benign homogenization of culture that might once have gone overlooked.
**Understanding Distinctions, Making Connections**

Throughout chapter two, I built a pyramid of inquiry that placed the local and national dimensions of multicultural education as the foundation. From there, broader transnational and international dimensions were added as subsequent layers. I then placed global education on the top. Throughout the development of this model, I made a dual argument that recognizes differences among foci, yet asserted an interrelated and interdependent dimension among those fields. Although my theoretical model highlights both distinctions and connections, I feel the literary and lived experiences of our study served to emphasize connections more than distinctions for the participants, helping them see local and global issues as interrelated. The following comment made at the debriefing helps capture that sense:

*Common Problems.* What I really got into was the racism and all that kind of stuff. Like a lot of the books I brought back...this one [points to Fox’s *Whoever You Are*] is great for teaching kids about that kind of thing. Also, *The Rabbits*, and Boori’s book [his autobiography *Maybe Tomorrow* (Pryor, 1998)] which I absolutely loved. I just think that’s what I really gained from the trip: Common problems and people working toward common goals in different countries.

Children’s literature was one gateway to making those connections.

**Accessing Resources and Fostering Collegiality**

As I described in the preceding section, becoming literary ambassadors was an exciting entrée into a world of art and imagination, to those who create the treasures we read, and to readers young and old who enjoy the world of story. Children’s literature opened a world of opportunity, connecting people and texts from around the world, and inspiring future work together.
Living through the rich connections that come from literature and lived experience as we did also points to a frustration when trying to replicate that experience for students in a Midwest classroom. In our debriefing session, one participant helped describe this sensation: “Take Aboriginal studies. If you read the books here, it’s…You just don’t get the depth of feeling that you got when you actually went there and saw people, and heard their stories. Everything’s on the surface [over here, without experience].” Perhaps like countless teachers, we have a renewed commitment to provide authentic materials and learning opportunities for our students, but can be frustrated by the difficulty in accessing those resources. Our difficulty in identifying, locating, and accessing quality international children’s literature points to the challenges on the literary dimensions; the richness derived from our interactions with cultural informants illustrates both the potential and need for furthering an intercultural collegiality.

Providing Cross-cultural Experiences and Reflection

This entire project was designed with the intent of providing rich cross-cultural experiences through both children’s literature and lived experience overseas. At each step of the way, I described my method of fostering experience, as well as the varied processes that helped promote reflection, response, and discussion. Our experience showed how children’s literature served as catalyst and common ground for these exchanges to occur. We have also demonstrated how virtually every dimension related to
the text—including author, illustrator, publisher, distributor, reader, teacher, and critic—can illustrate cross-cultural dynamics.

Ours was a unique combination of experiences. The following comment from the debriefing session helped illustrate how all of those parts of the study worked together:

We started in the beginning with all the pre-departure stuff, the literary and the lived experience, and then came back and did this debriefing. We’ve had each step on how to incorporate, or learn about a culture through literature. That gives us a glimpse of how to incorporate a culture into our classroom without doing it biasedly. For me it was a lot different from any of my other cross-cultural experiences.

It was an incredible experience, only glimpses of which I was able to capture within these pages. Each of us, in our own way, moved one step further down the path of becoming global educators. And, for one moment in time, children’s literature was an important part of that journey for our tiny band of travelers. In the next chapter, I will look back at where we have been in our adventure, then entertain thoughts of what roads lie ahead in the journey yet to come.
CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The story I have crafted in these pages is a very personal one. It is the story of a young dreamer, swept away to exciting adventures and magical places. First, through the kind and gentle voice of my mother or father reading at bedtime, then by myself as I learned to draw meaning from mere symbols on paper. Like the troubadour’s tale told in the oral tradition, my story grew with its teller, gaining richness and depth with each new experience. The child who once soared through the clouds with James in a giant peach eventually made his own journeys to distant lands, seeing castles and kingdoms, ancient ruins and temples—the things of legends past and those yet to be—one step at a time.

I was fortunate to turn private dreams into public ones, and to find a rewarding career in international education, helping others meet new people, see new places, and live their own life’s adventures. The amazing power of story that captured my being, my very soul as a child, fueled my desire to learn more about the world of children’s literature. I would become once again and forever more a student, but I would also become a researcher and a teacher. I would learn how others questioned the world, then
forge my own path of discovery. And, of course, I would invite others to join in that adventure as well.

All of this, and more, is what led me and five amazing pre-service teachers to read and experience, to ask questions and to struggle for answers, to learn more of our selves and a place called Australia that lay half a world away. I would not conduct mass surveys or reach broadly to explore effects in the wider population, for that would not serve my purpose. I had something very different in mind. I sought to take one moment in time and ask what a small, dedicated group of pre-service teachers could learn about another place, another culture, through deep immersion in its children’s literature. I would then build a program and take them on an amazing adventure. We would see, first-hand, the world of our mind’s eye, then compare our lived experience to our literary one. Through journaling and seminar discussions, individual reflection, one-on-one conversations, and group debriefings, we would chronicle our adventure, then tease out the meanings sewn throughout that journey. All of us, as humans seeking to make a difference in the world, would consider what this means to us as individuals, as teachers, and as global educators.

In the preceding pages, I described in detail the rationale for this study, including the specific research questions that we would address and the justification for the outsider perspective that we would embrace. I then reviewed the prior scholarship that informs our project, building a distinct point of inquiry that combined three areas of study and practice not normally addressed in concert: children’s literature, international experience, and pre-service teacher training. Through my discussion of methodology, I demonstrated
how our project was carefully orchestrated. I described each step of the process, explaining the purpose for and potential benefits from each highway and byway, each stop along the journey we were to travel. I then invited the reader to live through parts of that adventure as I described our findings, the meanings we drew from both literature and lived experience, and how our time together helped answer the questions that we set out to explore.

This last and final section will complete the circle. I will look back to review the central findings of our study, as well as its limitations. I will also look forward to discuss the implications of our research and the avenues for future study. Research is driven by the questions we ask of the world, and of ourselves. Following are the answers that our group of six found to questions posed months ago. Following, too, are the new questions that lie waiting on the horizon yet to be answered.

A New Theoretical Model

The first question of my study asked how children’s literature can serve as a bridge between Australian and U.S. cultures. To answer this question, we began by exploring pre-conceived notions of Australian culture, then identifying, reading, and responding to Australian children’s literature. Initial analysis of Australian texts found in the U.S. demonstrated how difficult it can be to readily identify the cultural roots of certain works; we later saw how some “foreign” books float seamlessly into the hands and lives of U.S. readers as cultural chameleons. The range of books that did become identified as “Australian” through either content or authorship illustrated a perplexing
variety of cultural representation in children’s literature. My struggle to relate the varied
types of representation—and our varied responses to those texts—led to the development
of a five-stage Model of Cultural Relativity in Children’s Literature (see Fig. 10). The
model provided interesting ways to bridge cultures through children’s literature, both
theoretically and practically.

Theoretically, this model shares some similarities with Bishop’s (1993) three-part
framework that classifies book as culturally specific, generic, or neutral. In particular,
Bishop’s “culturally specific” category can be seen as corresponding to the two deepest
levels of the new model: “Songs from the Heart” and “Special Stories.” However,
Bishop’s other two categories—generic and neutral—do not easily map onto the
continuum I suggest. This incongruence leads me to believe a different conceptualization
resulted from our “outsider” perspective that explored a distinctly different “other.”
Everything we identified as “Australian” was placed into the “other” category, a
seemingly simple yet powerful move that resulted in identifying the “chameleon effect.”
I argue that cultural chameleons are a fascinating phenomenon of intercultural children’s
literature, possibly invisible from a multicultural perspective that is highly attuned to
cultural difference and the painful realities of struggling for voice and representation.

Second, I argue that the new model provides a framework for including a wide
range of children’s literature in a study of culture, and for embracing broadly
Rosenblatt’s (1995) transactional relationship between reader and text. For example, the
frameworks for cultural exploration suggested by Freeman and Lehman (2001), Jobe
(1993), and Pratt and Beaty (1999) help to build skills in critical analysis and to foster
deep cultural readings of a text. These frameworks clearly celebrate texts at the deeper levels of cultural relativity, but might possibly discount ones considered superficial or lightweight. I suggest that the new model gives recognition and comparative critical space for the stereotypical elements of books like *Opera House Mouse* (Chapman & Oliver, 1999), as well as for the unique “but that’s my book” effect of cultural chameleons like *There’s a Sea in My a Bedroom* (Wild, 1987).

Finally, I suggest that the new model of cultural relativity in children’s literature helps identify and illustrate the complex ways in which “universal” cultural values can be perceived. The model has a dual effect. First, it presents a continuum of cultural specificity that creates a binary opposition between texts seen as the deepest, most culturally specific and those seen as the most general and culturally “universal.” Next, it questions this opposition by placing arrows that connect each end of the continuum to form a circle, thus challenging the very nature of those “universal” values it helps to identify. By representing both potentialities—the possibility of “universals” as well as the cultural basis of those views—the model itself can accommodate and respect both perspectives. As I describe below, the duality of this model can have benefits to further cultural awareness.

The proposed model is complementary to Bennett’s (1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), helping illustrate the interplay between reader response and world view. This combination is useful by inviting a more developmental view of reader response, thus moving beyond a simple debate over whether to stress similarities, as Jobe (1993) suggests, or to celebrate differences, as more typically
claimed by multiculturalists. Bennett’s theory argues that the answer to the similarities/differences debate depends upon the developmental stage of the individual reader. At the earliest stages of encountering cultural difference, it is critical to stress similarities to help readers enter into and accept other worlds; at later stages, recognizing and exploring differences is important to challenge a seemingly benign universalism. Individuals at various stages on the DMIS can relate to the proposed model differently, depending upon their level of intercultural sensitivity. First, the model can help more ethnocentric readers to acknowledge and explore the existence of cultural difference through “uncommon elements.” At the next stage, readers can recognize the potential connections that reach across difference through “common stories,” “chameleons,” and “universal” texts. Finally, the model can help move into more ethnorelative positions by drawing attention to the underlying values that influence supposedly “universal” texts.

As I experienced first-hand, one of the dangers of incorporating casually the DMIS in a seminar that emphasizes response to literature is that personal, heart-felt views can become openly challenged, even demeaned as a “developmental stage.” As noted in chapter four, I found theoretical ties to participant scores on the DMIS and responses to both literature and experience. But, I also felt like the Grinch who stole Christmas when I attempted to challenge those views. A possible benefit of the new model for cultural relativity in children’s literature is that it affords some of the same opportunities to address world views of the raw DMIS, but in a less confrontational format. I suggest that by working in concert with the DMIS, plus engaging other strategies for reading multiculturally (Bishop, 1993; Cai, 1998; and Hade, 1997) and reading transculturally
(Freeman & Lehman, 2001; Jobe, 1993; and Pratt & Beaty, 1999), the new model provides an expanded framework that helps embrace and address some of the more subtle, phenomenological effects of intercultural children’s literature.

**Catalyst and Common Ground for Intercultural Dialogue**

The emergence of a new theoretical model for cultural relativity led to a second major finding of this study: the potential for children’s literature to serve as catalyst and common ground for intercultural dialogue. Our intercultural reading experience, and the new theoretical model that emerged, played this role in at least three ways. First, it highlighted commonalities across cultures through books in the “Worldly,” “Cultural Chameleon,” or even “Common Stories, Uncommon Elements” categories. Second, it invited a discussion of how certain authors and texts seemed to exploit “uncommon elements,” thus leading to discussions of representation and cultural stereotyping. *Look What Came from Australia* (Davis, 1999) is one visually dynamic example that captures a multitude of stereotypes and cultural tokenism, thus prompting interesting discussions in our group. Third, it invited an exploration of deep culture through “Special Stories” or “Songs from the Heart.” Texts such as *Looking for Alibrandi* (Marchetta, 1992) and *The Rabbits* (Marsden & Tan, 1998) were direct examples of this latter category that had deep impact on our group.

The theme of catalyst and common ground was also a major finding for my second research question: how children’s literature can help enrich an overseas experience for its participants. This happened in two dimensions. First, as a pre-
departure exercise to prepare the participants for the experience, and second, while on the program itself. During the pre-departure phase, our use of picture books enabled the participants to engage with a wide range of texts, voices, themes, and genres in a very short period of time. Also, as argued by Cotton (2000) in the development of the European Picture Book Collection, the graphic elements of the picture books added visual dimensions to our discussion of culture and cultural representation. Although some of these literary experiences seemed to reflect, even reinforce, our more stereotypical, pre-conceived notions of Australian culture, they also challenged and expanded those notions, helping prepare us for the forthcoming lived experience. The texts provided common ground for class discussion, as well as an avenue to introduce critical perspectives in an exploration of culture. The overall comments made by the participants indicated that the use of children’s literature was both an informative and pleasurable way to learn about another culture, supporting claims made earlier by Freeman and Lehman (2001).

While on-site, the use of children’s literature had both expected and unexpected results. The participants’ experience illustrated how the simple read aloud of a children’s picture book, *The Bunyans* (Wood, 1996), served as an icebreaker and discussion starter for student teachers in an unfamiliar classroom, half a world from home. Among fellow teachers and colleagues, children’s literature also helped us to learn more about Australian culture and to appreciate how culture, background knowledge, and experience all impact the meanings we draw from texts. For example, one school’s literacy coordinator changed our view of *Mulga Bill’s Bicycle* (Paterson,
1973/2002) from a “silly” picture book about a “guy riding a bike” to a richly complex text that reflects Australian history, culture, and sense of humor. We saw children’s literature as a unique medium that engaged quickly and effectively through word and image, serving as common ground for discussion.

In addition to the ways in which we learned from and used the texts, our focus on children’s literature as international sojourners gave our group a tangible sense of purpose and enabled access to scarce resources. We became literary ambassadors, enjoying the company of countless individuals who shared an interest in children’s literature: authors, illustrators, teachers, scholars, students, etc. Without this shared focus, or our honorary status as international delegates, I sincerely doubt if we would have enjoyed such special opportunities. Throughout their journal entries and class discussions, participants noted how important those one-on-one interactions were to their overseas experience. Our experience supports Astin’s (1993) claim regarding the overwhelming importance of involvement measures: the degree to which students interact with other students, faculty, campus resources, etc. is one of the most consistent variables influencing student learning outcomes. Children’s literature was an enjoyable and effective way to foster such interactions.

In our case, children’s literature opened doors that would otherwise have gone unnoticed, or unopened. It facilitated interactions for us, both as a group and among others we met along the way. It also helped lighten the mood at times, reminding us to laugh and to be human.
The Interplay Between Literary and Lived Experience

As prompted by my second research question, this study provided a fascinating opportunity to compare literary and lived experiences, and to consider the interplay between the two. Reading prior to departure helped provide background knowledge and develop a context which made the experience overseas more meaningful, although that occurred to different degrees among individuals within the group. Our guided walking tour of The Rocks in Sydney based on the historical fiction novel *Playing Beatie Bow* (Park, 1980) afforded an excellent example. For the participants, the most powerful effect seemed to be for the lived experience itself to enrich understandings of the text, and to inspire re-reading with the expectation of finding new meanings. This relates to Beach’s (1993) discussion of experiential theories of response and “connecting past autobiographical experiences or previous reading to a current text” (p. 64). I sensed that the participants felt their lived experience would help enrich, as Langer (in Beach, 1993) suggest, their envisions of a text, helping them through the four processes of stepping in, moving through, stepping back, then stepping out of the text for reflection. In particular, the participants noted how their lived experience provided points of contrast and meaning to those drawn merely from the text, thus helping them be more engaged and evaluative.

I categorized my own experiences a bit differently. Although I might predict similar benefits for my future reading of “Australian” literature, I had a stronger sense on-site of how the literary experience with *Playing Beatie Bow* enriched my lived experience of The Rocks. Although several others made comments like “I even found
myself drifting back in time, putting myself as the character of Abigail,” I sensed that the
effect was stronger for me. My reading of Playing Beatie Bow introduced the history and
daily life of colonial Australia, making The Rocks a living, breathing place of excitement
and danger. For me, the story turned a mere tourist destination into a place of
fascination. I attributed this different intensity of experience to two factors. First, I had
visited The Rocks quickly as an unguided tourist, and prior to my reading Playing Beatie
Bow. Thus, I had the opportunity to compare that rather superficial experience to the
guided literary tour following a reading of the novel. Second, I considered how my past
experience traveling alone, on business, to countless strange cities left a yearning to
become more than a tourist, to connect, to meet the people, and to hear the stories told
behind locked doors that I could not enter. For all of us, literature helped open those
doors and invite us into another world, but perhaps past experience and heightened
expectations made that part of my journey a bit more intense.

**Becoming Global Educators**

My third research question asked how the literary and lived experiences of
children’s literature can help further the goals of global education for pre-service
teachers. This entire study has been an effort to illustrate the connections, benefits, and
potentialities of that unique perspective. I will begin with a review of how I made the
theoretical argument for those connections, then discuss how implementing a program
influenced by such a perspective can help place into practice the recommendations for
furthering global education with pre-service teachers.
In chapter two, I located global education at the top of a pyramid of inquiry that began with the text itself: children’s literature. I introduced the debate over authorship and cultural authenticity, then discussed how children’s literature provides a fascinating context in which to consider national and multicultural identities. I then extended the context to an international, transcultural dimension, noting how a small but devout group of scholars makes the case for children’s literature as cross-cultural exploration (Cai, 1997; Cotton, 2000; Freeman & Lehman, 2001; Jobe, 1993; Pratt & Beaty, 1999; Soter, 1997; Stan, 2002; Tomlinson, 1998). From this core theoretical base, I then argued that the combination of children’s literature and international, experiential education was a relatively unexplored domain with much potential. I discussed how theories and practices from cross-cultural training (Bennett, 1993; Fowler & Mumford, 1995; Kluckhohn, 1961; Weaver, 1986) might inform more traditional approaches to literature. I also theorized that the unique focus of children’s literature would have a symbiotic relationship with the lived experience overseas, each enriching the other. Other scholars have argued the benefits from and need for cross-cultural experience in global education (Hutchins, 1996; McFadden, Merryfield, & Barron, 1997; Myers, 2001; Wilson, 1984); I made the theoretical case for the role children’s literature could play in that process. As shown below, that is exactly what our experience demonstrated in practice.

This study shows that the central recommendations made by McFadden, Merryfield, and Barron (1997) to further multicultural and global education with pre-service teachers can be enacted through a program that combined children’s literature and international experience. Children’s literature—and the new theoretical model of cultural
relativity that evolved from this study—provided a context to explore similarities and
differences across cultures, to recognize and challenge cultural stereotypes, and to create
a bridge to aspects of deep culture. Literature itself served as catalyst and common
ground for intercultural dialogue, helping us learn more about ourselves as human beings
and the role culture plays in the understandings we draw from the world. We witnessed
how preconceived notions of Australia interacted with literary and lived experiences,
realizing first-hand how cultural learning is an on-going process. Discussions of cultural
authenticity, the need for culturally relevant materials, and the availability of children’s
literature globally, helped highlight social and educational inequities both within the U.S.
as well as internationally. And finally, our status as literary ambassadors facilitated
access to a wealth of individuals and resources, providing the opportunity to work with
colleagues now and for the future. Thus, our experience clearly demonstrated how the
goals of global education can be furthered through intercultural children’s literature for
pre-service teachers.

**Limitations**

This has been a study that explored the potentials for children’s literature as an
agent in cross-cultural exploration. I sought to test the degree to which “literature allows
us to see our own culture and to experience the culture of others in a way we cannot do in
our daily life” (Jobe, 1993, p. 14). I have spent considerable time arguing for its benefits.
What, then, are the limitations to this study? I will address first some of the broader
factors related to our overall focus and point of inquiry, then discuss more specific issues within the study itself.

I argued earlier that our group became “literary ambassadors,” enjoying elite status in Australia that enabled access to scarce resources. Although I noted many of the exciting benefits that came from interacting with literati, it is important to recognize that our experience was one of unique position and privilege. The vast majority of our time in Australia was spent with highly educated, urban, middle and upper middle class people committed to education and cross-cultural learning. Also, the geographic regions we visited influenced our experience. To make a comparison with the U.S., it is as if a group of outsiders came to North America and visited with leading educators, artists, and scholars in Boston, Chicago, and the Grand Canyon.

I think the dynamics of our experience resulted in a degree of sanitization and insulation from other aspects of Australian culture that would undoubtedly be less tolerant of cultural difference. Our group saw little of the more boisterous side of Australian culture that led to the unflattering stereotypes suggested by Sharp in *Culture Shock! Australia* (2001). One participant in particular seemed to be aware of this factor as well, noting the following comment in her journal:

People in Australia were eager to share their culture with us. They were extremely friendly and helpful. It was as if they wanted us to go home and tell everyone how wonderful Australians are. While almost everyone we met was nice and polite, think about where we were…we were exposed to upscale areas at the schools, and we were “guests” at the hotels and restaurants. I’m not trying to take anything away from the Australians, but I am trying to be realistic.
Clearly, a different type of overseas experience would result in interactions with other strata of Australian society, thus fostering very different perceptions.

As for the overall focus and tone of the study, I admit that my approach addressed cross-cultural conflict and learning from an artificially gentle, invitational perspective that may seem to ignore the urgency of racism in the U.S. and beyond. I can argue that our small group size, the need to protect confidentiality, and the public forum of dissertation research at a small regional campus in the Midwest limited my ability to explore the intricacies of racism. However, I do not think that such a simple response would do justice to this project. Rather, I suggest that this research helps to illuminate in new ways the dynamics of culture, children’s literature, and global education. I position children’s literature as an underutilized tool in the battle against racism and point to its untapped potential as catalyst and common ground for intercultural dialogue. As noted in chapter four, the participants themselves were making connections among social justice, equity, culture, literature, and their role as teachers in the classroom. Seeds of understanding and action were planted, but I realize how hard it is to be patient when others are starving for the fruits of justice yet to come.

Within the study itself, it is important to recognize a number of factors that limit the generalizability of our findings. This was a small, qualitative study with five participants who were purposefully selected. As noted in chapter three, my sample population may have a higher than average degree of interest in children’s literature and foreign travel, plus the ability to devote considerable time and money to participate in this endeavor. Other pre-service teachers might not be so engaged or privileged.
Similarly, as group leader and seminar instructor, I readily admit that my passion for exploring cross-cultural applications of children’s literature and my related experience may not be representative of the wider population. Thus, our group reflected a level of expertise and commitment that undoubtedly influenced our results; other groups may not enjoy similar results.

Even with our select population, I saw how challenging it was at times to tease out deeper meanings and to go beyond a more casual interpretation of both text and experience. Ours was a highly motivated and directed study; I doubt whether similar effects would be seen through unmediated literary or lived experience. Citing Bleich’s (1978) arguments on the “subjective paradigm,” Beach (1993) concludes that “readers enter into an inner dialogue between their experience with the text and their own conceptual framework, creating a dialectical tension between private experience and shared public knowledge which leads to a change in perceptions. This dialectical negotiation occurs best with others” (p. 53). Although this did occur with our group, I can easily see how difficult it might be to foster in other circumstances and with other populations.

Living through the challenges of fostering that dialectical negotiation led me to a greater awareness of the social dynamics of response. In the conception and implementation of this study, I sought to cultivate what Fish (1980) describes as an “interpretive community.” While I expected this to be a goal easily and deeply embraced by the participants, I realized that my efforts to challenge existing views and move response from a “monologic” to a “dialogic” perspective (Bakhtin, 1981) faced two
major hurdles. First, challenging one’s existing ideas and beliefs—particularly with the added pressures of living far away from home—can be both disorienting and exhausting. Second, the idea of fostering a literary community and engaging in higher level, dialogic thought, can be seen as pretentious, affected, and off-putting. I came to realize how the group’s strong Midwestern values and respect for “just plain folk” influenced their desire to be comfortable, to be themselves, and to celebrate the warm, people-to-people connections that feed the spirit. Although everyone in the group engaged with critical analysis and debate, it is important to recognize that other social and cultural factors may lend resistance to this process, thus limiting the breadth and depth of influence that literature can and should play in the overall learning equation.

Similarly, I would like to temper my exuberance in describing the potentialities of the literary and lived experiences to further cross-cultural understanding with a note of caution. As described earlier, literature itself had its limits in preparing for aspects of daily life in a multicultural environment, and the emotional strain of living in a foreign land. Throughout this study—and perhaps even the most ideal of studies—positive intercultural experiences were interspersed with ones seen as negative. Comfort zones were challenged, often through small differences in customs or etiquette. Moreover, not every intercultural experience was programmed or mediated. Despite the orderly and at times passionate argument for cross-cultural understanding through this study, our time in Australia was a very human experience, filled with the tears and laughter that accompany any study abroad program.
In my methodology chapter, I described an ideal cycle of inquiry that relied on an active, open, and interactive forum as well as a schedule of timely writing and reflection. My lived reality was quite different, illustrating two main points. First, I gained deep appreciation for the complex and personal nature of response to both literary and lived experience. As a teacher and researcher, I became sensitive to a rich personal world of thoughts and feelings that was too private for the public forum of class, or for collaborative research. Second, my methodological stance that favored writing and reflecting as a key to learning during the experience itself (Langer & Applebee, 1987; Wagner & Magistrale, 2000) has its limitations. Our packed schedule led to fatigue, severely limiting the time and energy available for formal assignments. Also, the physical and emotional intensity of our three-week immersion seemed to keep participants from stepping back and making broader, more evaluative comments about that which they were living. As humans engaged in an exciting but draining experience, we were able to chronicle our thoughts through personal writing, but needed time and emotional space to write and reflect in a more public, academic context. Theoretical models of research and learning need to be tempered with the lived realities of the human condition so as not to suffocate the very experience one hopes to create and study.

And finally, I began this study under the auspices of inviting students to join as co-researchers. This goal was far harder to realize than I expected. Agendas competed as often as they were shared; that which I thought clear to all lived only in my mind, lost through translation. The shift from student to researcher, from passive learner in an instructor-led classroom to active researcher responsible for one’s own learning, is
neither natural nor automatic, particularly in a foreign environment. I came to see how what I thought were “our” goals were really my goals. What I realize only now, though, is that we did end up with a collaborative research project. It just took me a lot longer than expected to know what one actually looks like in reality.

Recognizing the limitations of this study actually led me to see one of its strengths as well. I discovered that the most important aspect of our collaborative work together was realized only after the program ended, and as I prepared for a conference presentation with two of the participants. This was a time to work together as colleagues, to share ideas, to test theories and conclusions, and to present our findings as a team. This was what collaborative research should be all about.

About six months after returning from the program, I visited briefly with one participant in the hallway on campus. She had been a conference co-presenter with me and was now a Masters student. She was taking an introduction to research course, the distinctive blue-green cover of Glesne’s *Becoming Qualitative Researchers: An Introduction* (1999) peering out from her stack of books. Perhaps it was just my imagination, but I thought I detected a little smile as she said, “Now I know what you were trying to do with us.” I should have replied, “Me, too.” I learned first-hand there is no substitute for living through the experience of designing, conducting, evaluating, and then presenting research. I was just lucky to have had so much help along the way, and to have worked with five such exceptional human beings.
Implications

This study illustrates the rich potential for using children’s literature as a medium for cross-cultural exploration, particularly for pre-service teachers. The world of story, told through both text and pictures, can engage and challenge, providing a context to consider the values and beliefs that individuals and societies have toward children, education, and the world of tomorrow. The comparison of literary and lived experience highlighted the importance of culture, background knowledge, and prior experience in the meanings we draw from the world around us. Helping pre-service teachers experience first-hand those dynamics can support the goals of multicultural education in visceral, personally meaningful ways.

This study also illustrates how children’s literature can further the specific goals of global education. I argued for the theoretical links that connect children’s literature with multicultural and global education, then demonstrated how intercultural experience can be woven throughout that matrix to enrich the overall learning experience. I have also demonstrated how the goals of global education can be enacted programmatically, using children’s literature as catalyst and common ground.

Like countless students with whom I have worked over the years, the participants in this study were ready, willing, and able to learn more about the world around them. They shared a deep commitment to education and want to make a difference in their communities. As we demonstrated through our time together, children’s literature can be an effective and enjoyable way to accomplish those goals, helping bridge the divides of culture and ideology where more confrontational methods might fail. Teacher education...
programs face enormous challenges to prepare students for an increasingly diverse world. Our work illustrates the enormous potential of an untapped resource that can both motivate and instruct, providing new insights into the world of childhood that make us who we are today.

Our struggle to identify the cultural roots of children’s literature, and the curious chameleon effect that some readers experience, demands that we take a fresh look at the dynamics of power and representation in international publishing. Why do publishers homogenize texts, removing the very traits of “foreign” books that help American readers look at the world through different eyes? As teachers and intercultural educators, how can we expect the next generation to accept and embrace diversity if the books and stories of their childhood merely reflect a single, dominant culture? These are questions that can not be ignored if the goals of global education are to become a reality.

In the United States, children’s literature is an important part of the educational landscape, helping shape ideas of ourselves and the world around us. Why not help pre-service teachers gain the knowledge and skills necessary to understand, critique, and use those materials to foster the “attainable global perspective” that Hanvey (1975) suggests? Just as I did over thirty years ago, today’s children are reading about other people, other cultures, and other lands through the books of childhood. Despite the advances made by multicultural advocates, this study illustrates how much work still needs to be done. Why are precious resources still being spent to write and produce well-meaning, but deeply offensive books that dare to describe others as “a musical people.” We have both a right
and an obligation to demand more; the practical and moral implications of not doing so go well beyond the mere loss of opportunity.

**Recommendations for Future Study**

The new theoretical model for cultural relativity in children’s literature that emerged from this study leads to one avenue for future research. Can the five classifications—and the implied interrelationships among them—lead to new and more useful ways of identifying and discussing culture in children’s literature? What are its potentials, as well as its limitations? It would be fascinating to use the model to address other target cultures, as well as with readers/researchers from other cultures themselves.

Within the model itself, the chameleon effect is a phenomenological oddity that helps illuminate the reader/text transaction, inspiring a number of questions. What are the characteristics of both readers and books that result in this effect? I suspect that this phenomenon may be more pronounced with readers from cultures that enjoy widespread power, representation, and acceptance; less so with readers from cultures outside of a dominant sphere, or from ones that have been marginalized. As for the books themselves, even our group’s very limited experience with the dynamics of international publishing found a U.S. tendency to homogenize foreign texts, thus taking away the “uncommon elements” to make books more chameleon-like to U.S. readers. How widespread is this practice, and how do readers respond to these changes?

As noted earlier, books identified as “worldly,” “cultural chameleons,” and even “common stories, uncommon elements” can provide insight into shared cultural values.
Further research exploring what dimensions lend that familiarity could help identify and define those values, perhaps liberating a discourse on U.S. national identity. Similarly, engaging in a dialogue with cultural outsiders about U.S. children’s literature could highlight factors that lead others to classify texts as uniquely “American.” This, too, could help lend insight into U.S. culture, and the ways it is transmitted and perceived around the globe. From the production side of the equation, identifying which authors from which cultures are writing “worldly” books could expose a subtle form of cultural imperialism; analysis of those projected values—as well as resistance to them among readers—could provide insight into the complexities of culture in a supposedly global society.

I argued earlier for a theoretical compatibility between the new model of cultural relativity in children’s literature and Bennett’s (1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity. I see considerable potential for using the new model—and children’s literature itself more broadly—as a tool in cross-cultural training, particularly as a way to explore the cultural basis of “universal” values in a non-threatening way. Consider the dozens of fascinating and engaging picture books that can be packed into a single briefcase, then shared among a group in a half-day seminar. What other cultural artifacts are so portable, or hold such remarkable ability to entertain and engage? I have demonstrated part of that potential, but we have only just begun to scratch the surface.
Conclusion

I began this tale with the image of a young boy, entranced through the power of imagination and lost in the world of story. The journey that followed took more than thirty years, but is far from over. You see, other children are just beginning their own adventure through life. The stories they hear will be their first introduction to new people and places, around the corner and in far away lands. With the help of faithful friends like Winnie the Pooh, Kanga and Roo, Tigger and the Heffalumps, they, too, will have many adventures and learn what it’s like to live in the Hundred Acre Wood. Like those before them, this new generation will soar on the wings of imagination, their hopes and dreams building the world of tomorrow. And if we have any chance at all for a better world, one where hunger and war, fear and hate are but shadows of a bygone time, we must first consider the possibility. I can think of no better way to start than with a good story. Will you join me?


245


Webster, J. (2002). *Teaching through culture: Strategies for reading and responding to young adult literature*. Houston, TX: Arte Publico Press.


Children’s Literature


_____. (1906). *Puck of Pook’s hill*.


APPENDIX A

Program Application
Children’s Literature Research Study Tour

Halfway around the world from America’s heartland lies Australia, a vast continent of rich contrasts and striking beauty. From its rugged outback with some of Earth’s oldest landforms to the modern sophistication of vibrant urban centers, Australia offers unparalleled opportunities to explore both natural and man-made environments that combine to create a unique world “down under.”

This summer, [sponsoring school] will be inviting a select group of students to explore this fascinating region through an opportunity designed especially for individuals preparing for a career in teaching. This program goes beyond a typical sightseeing tour by engaging participants as ethnographers in the study of Australian culture. And, at the heart of it all is an exciting world of hopes and dreams, of triumph and tragedy, of past, present, and that yet to be: the world of children’s literature.

Your adventure begins in Ohio, months before stepping on a plane to cross the pacific. Together with your fellow students, you will form a small seminar group to examine ideas of culture, of yourself, and of Australia. Then, we will begin to read a cross section of the best children’s literature published in Australia and enjoyed by Australian children. Through a selection of picture books, informational, biography, fiction, historical fiction, fantasy, and young adult literature, we will begin to explore how authors think, feel, and write about the land “down under.” Who are the people, or peoples, that make up Australia? What factors, both natural and manmade, helped to define Australian culture? What stories and images fill the world of Australian childhood, and what do they mean for the Australia of tomorrow? These are but a few of the questions we will consider as we prepare for the next leg of our journey: the overseas experience.

As a group, we will travel from the [town of school] area to Australia for a three-week immersion experience. Our field experiences will include visiting historical, educational and cultural sites of Sydney, exploring the Great Barrier Reef and Aboriginal Cultural Center near Cairns, and participating in a one-week K-12 student teacher/observation placement at a host school. Throughout the field experiences, we will be testing, altering, and refining our ideas of Australian culture gained through the literature. In particular, it is hoped that the school placement will provide a special opportunity for participants to meet Australian students and teachers as we see first-hand the application of Australian literature in the classroom. Whereas the program is conceived as a cultural exchange, participants will be encouraged to share aspects of American children’s literature and culture with their Australian hosts.
Program Dates

Pre-departure Seminars and Orientation: These meetings will cover both academic and logistical issues pertaining to the program. Participants should plan for approximately 2 sessions toward the middle and end of winter term, and 3-4 sessions during spring term. Given the demanding spring block and other class conflicts, a number of sessions will probably be scheduled for Sunday afternoon and/or evening; a class calendar will be provided early January. Please note that all pre-departure sessions are mandatory.

Australian Immersion: Tentative dates for the overseas component are June 16 – July 5, 2003. Please note that dates may be altered slightly to allow for flight schedules.

Academic Credit & Registration

All participants are required to take the program for academic credit. Students will enroll in a designated study tour course section of Education T & L 698 for three undergraduate credit hours during summer term 2003.

Course Requirements

Students will be provided a course syllabus early winter term that shall be reviewed at the first orientation meeting. As noted above, students should be prepared to participate in group discussions, write journal reflections, and do significant reading of children’s literature prior to the overseas component of the program. The core children’s literature needed for the program will be provided to students at no cost.

Faculty Leader

Director of the [sponsoring school] Down Under Program is James Stiles, a 14 year veteran of international programming who has developed unique cross cultural programs in Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, and the U.S. for more than 4,000 students. Lecturer and doctoral candidate at OSU, his research interests combine intercultural education and children’s literature.

Application Deadline and Procedure

Students should submit a completed application along with a deposit of $200 no later than December 11, 2002. Applicants will be notified of their acceptance by Friday, December 20.

Students not accepted into the program will have their deposit check returned to them, uncashed.
Eligibility

This program is intended for students who have had little or no travel experience outside of the United States, and it seeks to provide an introduction to intercultural learning and ethnography through children’s literature. Students must be in good academic standing and eligible to enroll in academic coursework at [sponsoring school]. Preference will be given to students who seek a career in education and have a strong interest in both intercultural issues and children’s literature.

Costs

The following cost estimates are provided for budgeting purposes. The final program fee will be determined in February once all arrangements are confirmed.

Program Fee $2,700
Includes round-trip airfare from the XXXX area to Australia, all intra-Australia flights, airport transfers, hotel accommodations in double or triple rooms, group tours, selected course materials

Tuition for 3 Summer Term Undergraduate Hours $364
Sub-total $3,064
Anticipated Travel Grant from Dean’s Fund -1,000
Base Program Cost $2,064

Additional out of pocket expenses to consider:
Food on-site (17 days at $15 per day) $255
Misc. travel and pocket money 150
International Student Identity Card 25
Passport 60
Health Insurance supplement 35
Est. out of pocket $525

Payment Schedule:

Deposit due at time of application $200
Balance of Program Fee due April 11, 2003 $1,500
Summer tuition for 3 credit hours, due June 2003 $364

Additional Questions?

Please contact James Stiles, the program director, at stiles.2@osu.edu, or by telephone at (XXX) XXX-XXXX.
Children’s Literature Research Study Tour
Student Application

Name: ____________________________

last  first  middle

Birthdate: ________________________  SS#: ________________________

Gender:  Male ❑  Female ❑  U.S. Citizen:  Yes ❑  No ❑

Home Address: __________________________

street

city  state  zip

Phone: ____________________________  E-mail: ____________________________

Major: ____________________________  Concentration: ____________________________

Overall GPA in college coursework taken at XXXX: ____________________________

Expected date of graduation: ____________________________

Are you applying for a graduate program?  Yes ❑  No ❑  If yes, for which program(s) are you applying and when do you hope to enroll: ____________________________

____________________________________

____________________________________

____________________________________

Do you plan a career in teaching?  Yes ❑  No ❑  If yes, what grade level and subjects do you hope to teach? ____________________________

____________________________________

____________________________________

____________________________________

____________________________________

(over)
Have you traveled or studied outside of the U.S.? Yes ☐   No ☐
If yes, please describe: ____________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
In case of emergency, please contact: _________________________________
Relationship: ___________________ Telephone: __________________________

Applicant Statement:

Please attach a brief statement—not exceeding 750 words—that addresses the following questions:

Why would you like to go to Australia and what do you hope to learn?
How might participation in this program help prepare you to be a better teacher?

Transcript: Please attach a current [sponsoring school] transcript

Applicant consent and agreement:

I hereby authorize release of information from my student personnel record to faculty and administrators of the [sponsoring school] Down-Under program. If accepted, I shall abide by all rules and regulations of Ohio State University and agree to participate fully in all aspects of the program including: pre-departure seminars and orientation activities; on-site activities including lectures, tours, and classroom immersion; submission of all assigned coursework; post-program debriefings.

Signature of Applicant: _____________________________ Date: ____________

Please return your completed application along with a $200 deposit.
APPENDIX B

Longer Novels and Chapter Books Featured as Class Texts
Longer Novels and Chapter Books Featured as Class Texts

*Seven Little Australians* (Turner, 1894/1994): Set in suburban Sydney of the 1890s, this novel represented an important shift from the romantic adventures of the bush that were but fantasy to the lived realities of most children of the day. As noted by the State Library of Victoria, the novel enjoys classic status in Australian children’s literature: “Such has been the popularity of *Seven Little Australians* that it has appeared as a stage play in 1915, a film in 1939, a B.B.C. film serial in 1953, an A.B.C. Television serial in 1973 and a musical in 1978” (¶ 5). Sharing traits of other period domestic novels, I felt this piece would be an important grounding in Australian literary history and afford interesting contrasts to some of its U.S. counterparts like *Little Women* and the more rural adventures of the “Little House” series by Wilder.

*Storm Boy* (Thiele, 1963/2002): As noted on the back cover of the 40th anniversary edition, this short novel was “commended by the Children’s Book Council of Australia in 1964 and made into a feature film by the South Australian Film Corporation in 1976, Storm Boy has profoundly touched generations of readers and become a classic work of Australian children’s literature.” I felt that the strong emotional qualities of the novel, intense setting, and fast pace would make the novel appealing to the group.

*Looking for Alibrandi* (Marchetta, 1992): This novel was recommended highly to me for this project by Dr. John Stephens as groundbreaking in its multicultural view of modern Australia. Among the awards it received was book of the year for older readers by the Children’s Book Council of Australia. Other colleagues in Australia confirmed its widespread use and enjoyment, giving it status of a “modern YA classic.” In addition to the multicultural perspective shared within the text, the novel’s acceptance by the wider, Anglo Australian society provides interesting insight into Australia’s changing social climate.

*Playing Beatie Bow* (Park, 1980): Another modern classic that received the Australian children’s book of the year award, I was drawn to this novel because of its strong use of Sydney and “The Rocks” as a setting, thus affording unique contrasts to the literary and lived experiences I sought to compare. Employing time slip to transport the main character back in time 100 years, this historical fiction novel provided a wealth of information about early colonial life and times in Sydney. Also, the social and political times during which Park wrote the novel help illustrate the struggle to preserve Sydney history during the 1970s.
The Binna Binna Man (McDonald & Pryor, 1999) and My Girragundji (McDonald & Pryor, 1998): Pryor was recommended to me by colleagues as an Aboriginal story teller, teacher, educator, and writer (with McDonald) of growing popularity and impact on the educational scene in Australia. These short chapter books are inspired by Pryor’s own life history and offer a glimpse into the life, thoughts, and dreams of a modern-day Aboriginal boy growing up. They were chosen specifically to include culturally authentic texts and a voice/perspective not included elsewhere. They are quick reads accompanied by photographs by McDonald.

Two Weeks with the Queen (Gleitzman, 1989/2002): I learned through discussions with teachers and colleagues in Australia that Gleitzman is an immensely prolific author who enjoys wide popularity with middle school readers. Like so many other texts I eventually encountered, this one was recommended by colleagues as a powerful and captivating read. As noted on the back cover, Paula Danziger comments that it is “one of the best books I’ve ever read. It’s funny, moving, and it handles difficult subjects with skill and great respect.” For cross-cultural studies, this particular text is intriguing because it takes a young Aussie boy to London for two weeks, thus affording the opportunity to experience the contrasts and conflicts between Australian and British cultures, filtered through the eyes of an American reader.

The Day My Bum Went Psycho (Griffiths, 2001): Strongly recommended by Dr. John Stephens, this hilarious comedy is enjoying success in the U.S. as well. Griffiths is another powerhouse of Australian children’s publishing I felt we should experience, plus the off-beat, somewhat graphic humor of fantasy adventure would provide an interesting gateway to discussing culture, taste, and values in deciding what’s appropriate for children. The differences between the U.S. and Australian versions provided the opportunity to compare cultural homogenization for the U.S. market.
APPENDIX C

Pre-departure Journal Assignments
Pre-departure Journal Assignments

Step 1: Journal reflections on your ideas of Australian culture

Take a few moments to think and write about what you know or have heard about Australian Culture and Australia. Perhaps start with a brainstorm list of words that come to mind, for example: kangaroo, outback, desert, crocodiles, Olivia Newton John, etc. Expand the words/concepts you wrote with a few sentences about what they signify to you. What kind of images come to mind? What do they mean to you? Give yourself freedom to explore connections. Be creative! Write your thoughts, don’t just let them evaporate. Also, try to include doodles, drawings, sketches, or other graphics. Make your journal meaningful and interactive! You’ll need to refer to those early thoughts and images later in the program. After you have exhausted your ideas, step back for a moment and think about where and how you might have formed those ideas (TV, movies, stories, family history, friends, relatives, etc.). Write your thoughts.

Step 2: Explore local resources for Australian culture

Visit your local library at home and speak with your librarian about international children’s books in general, but specifically children’s literature related to Australia. Perhaps pretend that you are a K-9 student doing a project on Australia and using Children’s literature. What kinds of resources are available (picture books, holiday, folktales, biography, fiction, etc.). Browse through the materials and make a list of the titles available. Keep the list for your journal. Try to group the materials by category. Also, reflect on your exploration. Are there many materials available? More or less than you expected? Did the librarian know much about Australian children’s literature? Take a look at some of those materials and write about what they seem to say to you about Australian culture. Did they confirm, or contradict your prior notions? What are they seeming to say about Australia? Write down in your journal your reactions.
APPENDIX D

Research Overview and Request for Participation
Research Overview and Request for Participation

(Read out loud to the students at first formal meeting)

I am conducting research -- under the direction of my advisor, Dr. Barbara Lehman of The Ohio State University -- into the ways in which children’s literature can serve as a bridge between cultures. How can young adult literature and modern coming of age stories help us appreciate the issues facing today’s Australian youth? What images of Australia do picture books evoke, both past and present? Who is writing and publishing books about Australia and why? As cultural outsiders, what does all this tell us?

Our seminar, and overseas trip, is intended to address the above questions. For the purposes of my study, I would like to include your responses and reflections from journals, class papers, group discussions, as well as basic information about your academic background, GPA, and intercultural experience. Participation is completely optional. For data presentation, pseudonyms will be used to assure anonymity.

If you agree to participate, I would like permission to

1) Review and analyze your written work
2) Discuss individually or in small groups your thoughts and responses to the literature as well as your impressions of Australian culture
3) Administer a brief survey at the completion of the program
4) Use an audio and/or video tape recorder to record group/class discussions for later analysis, if everyone is comfortable with that.

Any questions?

Please understand that you may choose not to participate, or withdraw from the study at any time without any effect on your course grade whatsoever. If you agree to participate, please read the following consent form and sign where indicated.
APPENDIX E

Consent Form
CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL RESEARCH

Protocol title: Exploring Australian Culture Through Children’s Literature

Protocol number: ___________  Principal Investigator: Dr. Barbara Lehman

I consent to my participation in research being conducted by Dr. Barbara Lehman and James Stiles of The Ohio State University.

James Stiles has explained the purpose of the study, the procedures that will be followed, and the amount of time it will take. I understand the possible benefits, if any, of my participation.

I know that I can choose not to participate without penalty to me. If I agree to participate, I can withdraw from the study at any time, and there will be no penalty. If I do elect to withdraw from the study, I will still have to complete all academic requirements of the seminar to receive academic credit and to be eligible for any travel funds provided by the university.

I consent to the use of audiotapes and/or videotapes. I understand how the tapes will be used for this study.

I consent to the use of the following information from my academic records: overall academic record/experience, GPA.

I have had a chance to ask questions and to obtain answers to my questions. I can contact the investigators at (419) 755-4011. If I have questions about my rights as a research participant, I can call the Office of Research Risks Protection at (614) 688-4792.

I have read this form or I have had it read to me. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

Participant: ______________________________________________________

Date: _______________  Signed: ________________________________  (Participant)

Signed: ______________________________  Signed: ______________________________

Dr. Barbara Lehman, Principal Investigator  James Stiles, Co- Investigator

HS-027 (Rev. 05/01)  (To be used only in connection with social and behavioral research.)
APPENDIX F

Pictorial Overview of Program
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 15</td>
<td>Depart Columbus</td>
<td>16 Cross Int.</td>
<td>17 Arrive Melbourne</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19 Primary School</td>
<td>20 Explore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AA#1271 at 3:01</td>
<td>AA#1271 at 3:01</td>
<td>Date line – Lose</td>
<td>8:00 AM</td>
<td>9:30 –</td>
<td>Visit</td>
<td>museums and other sights of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PM to LA Via</td>
<td>PM to LA Via</td>
<td>one day</td>
<td>Settle in, area</td>
<td>11:30 AM</td>
<td>Afternoon lecture,</td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dallas. Arr. LA</td>
<td>Dallas. Arr. LA</td>
<td>briefing,</td>
<td>briefing and visit,</td>
<td>at Victoria St. Lib.</td>
<td>Howard Mould</td>
<td>Evening dinner with XXXX’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at 6:51 PM</td>
<td>at 6:51 PM</td>
<td>walking tour</td>
<td>2:00 – 4:00 PM Briefing</td>
<td>Lit at Victoria St. Lib.</td>
<td>Mould Family</td>
<td>family?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>and visit, historical</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>collection of Aust.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>child. Lit at</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Victoria St. Lib.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Group Dinner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:40 PM</td>
<td>12:00 PM</td>
<td>11:40 PM</td>
<td>12:00 PM</td>
<td>12:00 PM</td>
<td>12:00 PM</td>
<td>Explore Piece of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>departure</td>
<td>from LA</td>
<td>from LA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>from LA</td>
<td>Reef Tour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from LA</td>
<td>-- Qantas</td>
<td></td>
<td>12:00 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td>12:00 PM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flight 94</td>
<td>Flight 94</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>from LA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12:00 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td>12:00 PM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>from LA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13:00 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td>12:00 PM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>from LA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14:00 PM</td>
<td></td>
<td>12:00 PM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>17 Melbourne</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12:00 PM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>17 Melbourne</td>
<td></td>
<td>12:00 PM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>17 Melbourne</td>
<td></td>
<td>12:00 PM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>17 Melbourne</td>
<td></td>
<td>12:00 PM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>17 Melbourne</td>
<td></td>
<td>12:00 PM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>17 Melbourne</td>
<td></td>
<td>12:00 PM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>17 Melbourne</td>
<td></td>
<td>12:00 PM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>17 Melbourne</td>
<td></td>
<td>12:00 PM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>17 Melbourne</td>
<td></td>
<td>12:00 PM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>17 Melbourne</td>
<td></td>
<td>12:00 PM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>17 Melbourne</td>
<td></td>
<td>12:00 PM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2023 Children’s Literature Study Tour to Australia</td>
<td>2023 Children’s Literature Study Tour to Australia</td>
<td>2023 Children’s Literature Study Tour to Australia</td>
<td>2023 Children’s Literature Study Tour to Australia</td>
<td>2023 Children’s Literature Study Tour to Australia</td>
<td>2023 Children’s Literature Study Tour to Australia</td>
<td>2023 Children’s Literature Study Tour to Australia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX G

Reflection Topics and Review of Journal Assignments
2003 Children’s Literature Research Tour to Australia
Written Assignment Overview & Course Wrap-Up

As our class discussed on-site, following is an overview of the written reflections and activities due to complete the course. The reflections are intended to be working documents that provide an opportunity for you to chronicle your response to the literature and both Australian and U.S. cultures as you engage with the texts. They are NOT expected to be finished, polished products like course papers. Rather, they should include unanswered questions raised by the literature, thoughts provoked, conflicts indicated, ideas for exploration, personal reactions, etc. Try bulleting ideas/images; include messy unfinished ideas and thoughts. A goal is to stimulate and chronicle engagement with the texts and experiences, so try to reflect those processes in ways that work for you.

1. Pre-departure Reflections on Australian Literature

Please collect your notes and reading journals for the core class texts (Seven Little Australians, Storm Boy, Looking for Alibrandi, Playing Beatie Bow, The Binna Binna Man and/or My Girragundji, Two Weeks with the Queen and/or The Day my But Went Psycho, and Christmas in Australia) as well as other texts you encountered, both picture books and longer works. Comment on what images and ideas of Australia and Australian cultures(s) the texts helped to generate for you. How did you respond to the texts? What meanings did you draw? How did they relate to one another? How do you see the texts as cultural products? For those other than the core class texts, include full citation (author and illustrator, year published, title, publisher). Reflections should cover 7-10 longer works, plus 12-15 picture books, more if possible. Due no later than July 20, 2003.

2. Reflections on Key Experiential Components of On-site Program

Drawing on your field notes and personal journal, comment on each key academic component of the program. What did the experience add to your understanding of US/Australian culture and children’s literature? What were the key points of impact/meaning for you? How did the session impact your experience? Consider things like social context of learning/literature, insights that cultural insiders provide, layers of meaning, importance of setting, interplay of preconceptions -- confirmations and surprises, etc. Stretch yourself to think deeply, but it is OK to be messy and explorative. Due no later than July 20, 2003. Key components to write on are:

1) Booktalk for Teenagers session at Victoria State Library
2) Briefing of historical collection at Victoria State Library
3) Ivanhoe East Primary School visit
4) Clifton Hill Primary School visit
3. Drawing Meanings and Making Sense of Initial Reflections

Now that you’ve thought and “written through” some of your experiences, the next goal is to take one further step back from the actual experience and ask broader, more comprehensive questions about the experiences. I’ve identified three key themes to explore (noted below) and ask that you begin by working with those. If you feel other themes have emerged for you, list them and/or comment on those as well if you like.

So, drawing from your earlier reflections and field notes, comment on the following three themes. I’ve included some of my own thoughts to get started. **Due no later than July 20, 2003**

**Impact of one-on-one interactions**

Throughout the program, we’ve met many different types of Australians working in the academic realm (academics, writers/illustrators, program coordinators, teachers, librarians, principals, guides, etc.). We’ve also met and spent considerable time with the delightful and incomparable Kon and Sophie! In an anthropological sense, each of these individuals serve as “cultural informants” in our journey to understand and experience Australia. What have these more informal, one-on-one interactions meant for that journey—both the literary and physical ones? Given that we are outsiders to Australian culture, what do cultural informants add to our understanding and experience? Which ones were most meaningful? Why? How important do you think cultural informants would be if you were going to teach about another culture in your classroom and how might you want to use them?

**At the source: Literature, learning, and teaching in action**

How has your observation of Australian children and classrooms, and the use of children’s literature on-site impacted your understandings of U.S. and Australian culture? Or, even more broadly, how did it impact your understandings of education? Did the literature serve as a catalyst for discussions of culture (through read alouds of *The Bunyans*, for example)? Did you learn anything about yourself as an American through
this process? About Australia and Australians? Do you think any differently about yourself as a teacher and your goals for future teaching?

**The literary versus lived experience**

Central to this program has been the goal of exploring literature as a vehicle for cross-cultural understanding, and then comparing and contrasting that experience to the actual, lived experience of another culture. How, if at all, have any of your literary experiences affected your lived experience? And conversely, how have your lived experiences affected your literary understandings? How helpful, or not, has literature been in introducing you to Australia and Australian cultures? What types of texts worked for which types of understandings? Considering that children are often cultural outsiders themselves to texts, to histories, and to cultures presented in classrooms, what does your own experience say to you about using (cross-cultural) literature in the classroom? Draw from your field notes and try to refer to some specific examples.

**4. Wrap-up meeting and research dimensions of course**

Given that much our writing and reflections are being completed upon return to the U.S., we have not had time as a class to discuss them and learn from one another. So, it will be important to gather together again as a group, to discuss our thoughts and findings, and to analyze our experience together as co-researchers. At that time, we will also take the IDI again post-program. Also, I would ask that folks bring to this meeting the book(s) that have been most meaningful for them throughout the cross-cultural experience. We missed our chance on-site to have this booktalk, so it would be nice to have it when everyone is more relaxed. I hope to schedule this meeting (at everyone’s convenience) after [participant] returns from Jamaica – with luck, sometime between August 4 and August 16 will work out for everyone. Please bring photos and other things folks wish to share with the group.

Also, once your fearless instructor has had a time to read through your reflections, he may have some additional questions about your thoughts/experiences to ask individually. Similarly, once all individual responses are compiled, he expects to put together a “grounded survey” that asks for your comments/ideas on some themes that emerged from our experience as a whole. This can be done by e-mail, or through an individual interview.

Finally, those who are interested are encouraged to stay connected with the instructor and to work on a presentation for the Children’s Literature Conference in 2004. It is my sincere hope that everyone’s experience in Australia and the findings that emerge will encourage a life-long interest in cross-cultural learning through children’s literature. You
have all been a major part of this exciting research endeavor and I hope that it is but the beginning of things yet to come.

Please note: This hand-out was edited for inclusion in this public document. In addition, the class seminar design called for an individual project that participants would begin in the U.S., then complete in Australia. The idea behind this was to provide some link between the student teaching in the U.S. and the class visits in Australia. Although some interesting experiences resulted, that component resulted in a variety of fragmented materials, concepts, and ideas not central to my research questions. Thus, I did not include those efforts as part of this study.
APPENDIX H

Permission to Use Iceberg Analogy and Kluckhohn Model
Dear Mr. Stiles,

Yes, we grant you permission, free of charge, to use in your dissertation both the chart in Kohls' book and the figure in Weaver's. Please understand that this permission is for one-time use only and is not applicable to any future use you may make of your dissertation. (If you do need permission again in the future, please reapply.)

Citations for these two pieces should read as follows:


These citations are in our standard format, but if you have another format you'd prefer for the elegance of your text, I don't mind your using it, as long as it contains the pertinent information. Just send me your alternate version for approval.

Best,

Brenda Tubby
Permissions

Intercultural Press/Nicholas Brealey Publishing
374 US Route One, P.O. Box 700
Yarmouth, ME 04096 USA
(207) 846-5168 or (866) 372-2665