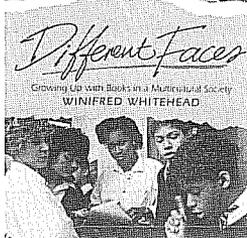




Different faces: Growing up with books in a multicultural society. Winifred Whitehead. London (England): Pluto Press, 1988. 277 pp., cloth. ISBN 0-7453-0252-1.



Different faces is a peculiar book. There are lots of interesting insights into the literature of many countries. It is difficult, both to read and to review, unless one starts with a thorough knowledge of those different literatures. The basic premise, that literature helps us empathize with those who are different from ourselves, is clear and worth stating over and over. I like the quotations that indicate that children don't

really see racial differences unless their seniors focus on them. This is true. In a classroom of eight-year-olds which contained four racial groups and every possible mixture I had to explain that there are distinct racial differences between people and that these are given names. The children were fascinated. *They* tended to focus much more upon differences of social class and those subtler distinctions of status that prevail in every classroom, such as who is athletic and who has the trendiest clothes.

Different faces is a heavy book; helpful for the teacher who wants to bring a multicultural orientation to his or her classroom, but heavy going for the casual reader. It does not address Canadian cultural identities, and so its usefulness here would be as a comparative indicator. To be helpful in a Canadian context its observations should be tied to particular examples of Canadian fiction.

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