

Boyd, F. B. (2002). Conditions, concessions, and the many tender mercies of learning through multicultural literature. *Reading Research and Instruction*, 42, 58-92.

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Summary: Four case studies were done in a 9th grade English class at a high school located in a suburb of a large metropolitan city. The author, an African American university professor, worked with a European American teacher in studying student reactions to multicultural literature. Four students were studied: Nicole, European American female straight-A student; Tweety, African American female struggling reader and writer; Gero, mixed-race male (parents from Trinidad and Tobago) struggling reader and writer; and Nic, European American male struggling reader and writer. Nicole and Tweety read *A Taste of Salt: A Story of Modern Haiti* (1992) by Temple and Gero and Nic read *Chain of Fire* (1989) by Naidoo. The goals of the study were to understand students' responses to the texts and to examine students' experiences as they constructed meaning from multicultural literature.

Assumptions:

- According to Reader Response Theory, readers bring their own meaning to text based on their background experiences, feelings, preferences, etc.
- The experience of reading multicultural literature frequently enables students to come to a better understanding of other cultures, thus negating learned stereotypes.
- The American education system has historically ignored literature written by and about people of other cultures.

Results:

- Students of culturally diverse backgrounds connected better to multicultural literature than did students of European American background.
- Students' responses varied from surface level understanding to in-depth connections to their own lives.

Conclusions:

- Multicultural literature can be an effective way to raise a student's cultural awareness.
- Students need time and opportunity to discuss multicultural literature.

Suggestions for Teachers:

- Multicultural literature should be included in the English classroom.
- Teachers need to build background knowledge before introducing multicultural literature to their students.
- Teachers need to consider the quality and quantity of student work.

Suggestions for Literacy Leaders:

- Develop curriculum and materials that include multicultural literacy.
- Support teacher development of effective use of multicultural literature.