

# DIVERSITY WITHIN LITERATURE

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# BRIEF OVERVIEW



**WHY DID I CHOOSE TO  
RESEARCH THIS?**

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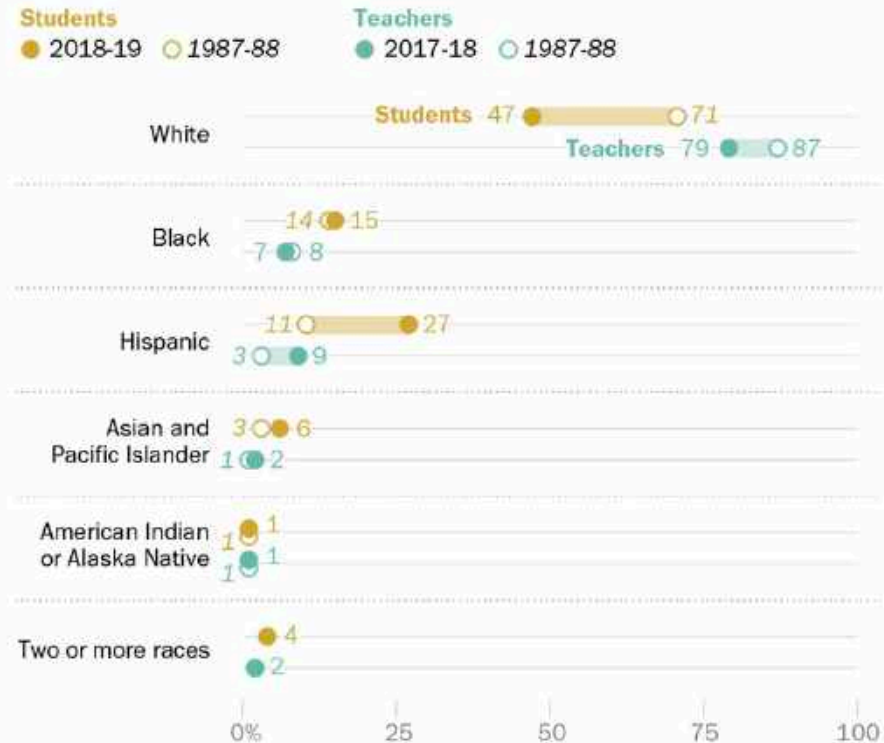
**WHAT IS THE ISSUE?**





## Racial and ethnic makeup of U.S. public school teachers and students has changed over time

% of public school teachers and students who are \_\_\_\_, by year



Note: All races are non-Hispanic. Hispanics are of any race. Data for those of two or more races not collected in earlier years. Pacific Islander and Asian students were categorized together in the 1987-88 school year. For direct comparison with 1987-88, Asians and Pacific Islanders are grouped together in later years.  
Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

# TIMES ARE CHANGING

- Statistics show that White students are soon to be the minority in US schools (Koss 2020).





## NOT A STEADY REFLECTION

- Even though our classrooms are more and more diverse, our literature doesn't reflect this. In 2018, out of the 3653 books presented to the Cooperative Children's' Book Center, 11% included characters that were African/African American, .09% Asian/Pacific Islander, .07% Latinx, and .02% Indigenous (Connor 2016).

# **BUT THE REPRESENTATION WE DO HAVE**

In 2013, Amina Chaudri and William Teale focused on biracial identity within literature studied 90 published books, about .2% of books within the following parameters:

- Published between 2000 and 2010
- Only contemporary and realistic fiction
- Intended audience was between the ages 9-14 years.

Mixed race characters were depicted as financially unstable and with biological parents who were neglectful, dead, or not included in the story.



# WHAT IT NEEDS TO BE

- The benefits of representation only come with positive representation, which means non-discriminatory and no stereotypes unless the story also shows students how to fight against them (Levin 2003).
- Diverse literature should also focus on main characters of color outside of their trauma and should not exemplify the notion of a “White savior” (Borshiem-Black & Sarigianides 2019).
  - For example, we love to teach To Kill a Mockingbird by Harper Lee and check off the diversity box. However, we must consider that both Black characters are side characters, and Tom Robinson has only one full scene in the courtroom. Even then, this book emphasizes the White savior narrative by having Atticus be “the hero.”







## WHY DOES REPRESENTATION MATTER?

Helps children experience cultural pride, familiarity, sense of belonging, and self-respect (Levin 2007).

In a school system that tries to force students to “blend in,” reading representation fosters commonality among peers and even ethical respect (Marx 2008; Levin 2007).

A study published in 2016 by Carol Conner shows that representation “increases reading motivation, stamina, fluency, and reading comprehension.”



**How current students feel about the racial and ethnic representation they've encountered so far in their assigned classroom readings?**



**WHAT'S NEXT?**



Q1

What school did you attend for grades 5-8?

Q2

What school do you attend currently?

Q3

What is your race and ethnicity?



Q4

Agree or Disagree: It's important for students to see their racial/ethnic identity represented in the classroom.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
  - ☐ Somewhat Agree
  - ☐ Neither Disagree nor Agree
  - ☐ Somewhat Disagree
  - ☐ Strongly Disagree
- 
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Q5

Agree or disagree: My current school's assigned literature is reflective of the races and ethnicities present in the student body.

- ☐ Strongly Agree
- ☐ Somewhat Agree
- ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ☐ Somewhat Disagree
- ☐ Strongly Disagree



Q6

Did you see your racial/ethnic identity represented in school assigned literature?

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ I don't remember
- ☐ I'm bi/multiracial, and I've seen a part of my identity represented.

Q7



Would/Do you like to see your racial/ethnic identity represented in school assigned literature? Why or why not?





Q8

Finish the statement: I've seen my (or a part of my) racial/ethnic identity represented within the school's assigned literature, and \_\_\_\_\_  
(please select all that apply)

- ☐ \*\*I have not seen my racial/ethnic identity represented
  - ☐ my identity was represented accurately and respectfully.
  - ☐ my identity was represented inaccurately and/or stereotyped.
  - ☐ my identity was represented through a main character.
  - ☐ my identity was represented through a supporting character (best friend/sidekick/etc.).
  - ☐ my identity was represented through a background character.
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Q9



I'm researching whether or not students feel like their racial and ethnic identities are represented in the school's assigned literature.

Knowing the purpose, is there anything you'd like to add about this topic?



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**QUESTIONS/IDEAS?**