



Ideas for Welcoming ELL Students to the School Library

One of the most important roles teachers or librarians can assume is to include reading material for those who are learning to read English as their second language, those who are new to the school and perhaps the United States, and those who may have multiple additional concerns with which they have to deal such as moving, leaving family and friends in their country of origin, or worse: dealing war torn trauma. They are also the students who are **least** likely to come ask, "Do you have a book about someone like me who has just immigrated to the U.S.?"

Further, these are the students who are most likely to need additional and often unique reading material as they learn a second language (English), and for whom you can help draw connections with reading in English to their complex lives. Consider some of the following ways to touch these readers.

1. Rotate/display books from various parts of the world. By simply integrating literature from around the world throughout the library or classroom, students may find books that they otherwise would never have known were in the collection. Perhaps create a permanent display of world literature. But don't just have a "special spot" for these, integrate them throughout and then perhaps guide readers to particular titles if necessary.
2. Write brief reviews of immigrant/refugee stories and display the reviews near those books. These can be simply sticky note reviews, just a sentence or two, with a personal teacher or librarian "touch" similar to reviews seen by employees in independent bookstores. (I always pick the book up and look when I see one of these in a bookstore because that review personalizes the book, don't you?)
3. Pair and display books from a country across the globe with a similar story or plot line that they may already be reading in class. Draw connections with these stories to their commonalities.



4. Put a simple note in each teacher's box, "What countries of origin are represented in your class?" This can be done monthly, once a quarter, but at minimum sometime in the fall. It can also provide a way to show the school, classroom, or library supporting ELL students' reading.
5. Display authors from countries other than the United States; post their picture with their books. Face out. Display their blogs or websites. Students need to see authors that look like them and to know there are writers and illustrators out there that are connecting their country of origin to readers.
6. Increase your graphic novel collection. One way ELL students' English learning can be scaffolded is through reading graphic novels because they offer visual enhancement of the storyline or content of a book.
7. Novels written in narrative verse are another way for ELL students to be provided with age and interest appropriate titles with less dense reading.

And always, read, read, read as many books from around the world, as many as you can get your hands on, including and just as importantly, books in translation. Consider seeking and writing a grant to procure these titles. Schools where there are high numbers of ELL students are much more likely to qualify for grants for ordering specific ELL-interest titles.