

Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors: Building a Diverse Classroom Library

By Adela Barz

In her influential essay “Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors,” Dr. Rudine Sims Bishop describes how books can serve three vital functions. Some stories act as mirrors, reflecting our own identities and experiences. Others act as windows, giving us a glimpse into lives and cultures different from our own. And when we read widely, those windows become sliding glass doors—inviting us to step into new perspectives and connect more deeply with the diverse human experience.

As an English teacher, I believe it is my responsibility to carefully curate a classroom library that reflects a rich variety of voices, ensuring a thoughtful mix of both mirror and window texts. Dr. Bishop reminds us that when students don’t see themselves represented in books—or only see themselves in distorted or stereotypical ways—it sends the harmful message that their stories don’t matter. That’s why it’s crucial to provide students with access to authentic, multicultural literature written not just about people of color, but by people of color.

To build a strong and inclusive library, educators must take on two key roles: researcher and reader. When I browse for new books—whether for my students or my own reading—I make a conscious effort to reflect on my own biases, expand my perspective, and seek out well-researched, diverse titles. I can’t recommend meaningful “mirror” books if I haven’t explored those voices myself. To support this effort, I’ve compiled a growing “to-read” list using trusted resources, some of which are linked below.

If we want to foster equity and empathy in our classrooms, we must normalize multicultural literature—not as a trend or special category, but as an essential and permanent part of our reading lives. Let’s make space for all students to see themselves and others in the pages they read. Let’s open the doors to understanding, one book at a time.

Recommended Resources:

- Nic Stone, author of *Dear Martin*, shares powerful insight on the value of “mirror” books and recommends Black-authored titles: [Cosmopolitan Article](#)

- Auditing your classroom library? Here's how to get started: [Edutopia Guide](#)
- Looking to build a diverse collection? Explore the reading lists and tools from: [We Need Diverse Books](#)
- Middle school teachers—here's a multicultural summer reading list: [Colours of Us – Middle School](#)
- High school educators—browse these curated YA book lists: [CSULB Diverse YA Literature](#)
- Want to diversify your personal reading? Start here: [Keeping Up With the Penguins](#)