

1. Title: Mothers as Diverse Purveyors of Culture - Maternal Themes in Children's Literature

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6. Abstract:

This paper focuses on two issues: the potential of children's literature both to perpetuate stereotypical gender images of mothers and to confront the status quo and the quality of characterization development in children's picture books. Teachers in the study were asked to identify a picture book that includes a mother in a major role and describe the primary roles and responsibilities attributed to that character. Participants were also asked to describe their view of the 'ideal' mother. Results indicate that teachers are not consciously aware of the portrayal of maternal figures in children's books and children are not taught to be critical literary consumers. Suggestions for professional development are offered to encourage a critical examination of assumptions about gender, race and class related to early literacy. Feminist guidelines for selecting books and summative commentary on the role of the mother figure in children's books if included.