

mine than anybody thought at first because there are no simple answers—at least there are no simple answers that are worth much.

Perhaps I can illustrate this point by listing a few of the questions we have asked ourselves about the kinds of instructional materials that will do the best job of representing minority groups.

1. At first we asked ourselves whether we should develop special books for schools that have largely nonwhite (or other minority groups) students in order to provide them with stories, for instance, that are more relevant to their environment than the “Dick and Jane” stories of the past.

We decided that we should, and the “Skyline Series” is one of the results of that decision. Obviously the answer was not simply to retain the stories and change the illustrations to include a few dark-skinned children. Nor was the answer to include stories about African children or dark-skinned children in other parts of the world.

If the books were to penetrate to the heart of the problem, the stories themselves should reflect the environment and the experience, the satisfactions and frustrations of children living largely in urban ghettos.

2. But readers such as the “Skyline Series” with their warm and friendly stories and illustrations also met the needs of children in schools attended largely or entirely by white pupils. For these children the “Skyline Series” made them aware of the common bond of all children regardless of racial background or environment.

3. What about reading level: Don’t minority group children in city schools have less verbal ability than white children in suburban schools? Or is it more accurate to say that children of all groups who live in slums are apt to have less verbal ability than children of all groups who live in the suburbs. We believe the latter is more accurate, and that is why there is as much concern now for multilevel materials as for multiracial materials.

4. Related to this is the matter of motivation. Books and films with high motivational value will do a lot more good than materials without it. Do the same things motivate minority group children that motivate other children? Probably yes, but the answer to this is not at all clear.

5. Elaborating on this point, should stories use the idiomatic language of the minority group? Or, forgetting the minority group origin, should the characters in stories with slum settings speak the language of the slum? That might make them more meaningful. But reading teachers are trying to get the children to speak better English, and won’t the slang in the stories hurt this effort? (Some good research is being done in this whole area.)

6. To touch on a particularly sensitive matter, what type of Negro should be used in illustrations to represent the whole group? In our opinion, the illustrations should be representative of all of America’s Negroes in order to show that they have different physical characteristics and a wide range of color (just as white people do), and that they are found at all levels of our society. And the same thing applies to other minority groups: Jews, Spanish-Americans, Orientals, and Puerto Ricans.

7. Turning to the development in Negroes (and in all children, for that matter) of a better understanding of the contribution of minority groups to American history and life, what are the best ways to do it?