

[School Library Bulletin]

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FOCUS ON ONE AMERICA

Using Books for Better Human Relations

It was six years ago, in February and March, 1960, that the *School Library Bulletin* published its original bibliography on "Focus On One America." In October-November, 1962, and, again, in October-November, 1964, supplements to this original bibliography were presented. During this six years, a number of the books have gone out of print and new books have been published. Therefore, this current bibliography is published. It is a complete revision of the three former lists and extends through four regular numbers of the *School Library Bulletin*, October, 1965-February, 1966.

The purpose of this bibliography was stated in the Introduction to the original one. We quote: "Books do not take the place of first-hand acquaintances but they can extend our knowledge of others. They can give us a picture of how another family lives and grows up, what special foods they like, what holidays they celebrate, and in what kinds of homes they live.

"Reading about a boy or girl from a strange land or from a family very different from our own, often brings that boy or girl very close to us. We see he laughs as we do and is hurt by the same things which hurt us, that he has to learn to assume responsibility or has to give up something he wants very much, just as we often do.

"With this book friend, it does not matter that his house is bigger than ours, and more splendid, or, on the other hand, the poorest house we have ever seen. If he is a likeable character, we are fond of him for his own sake.

"We may even be able to be fond of him if he is not a likeable character, because we can understand, from the book, just what makes him disagreeable. We may see that he is not understood by a mother who is too tired and sick to have much patience with him. Or that his father wants him to follow a career the father never had the opportunity to follow, while the boy is not at

all meant for that career. We may see him as a new boy in a strange school where he is taunted for his strange accent and his odd clothes. Because we now know him, personally, we can see the situation from his side . . .

"These are the opportunities books offer us. They help us to break down what are called 'stereotypes,' just as knowing our neighbors well helps us to break down any 'stereotypes' we may have of them. If we think of all boys and girls of one religious group, or of one nationality, or of one economic group as always acting in the same way, always being the same kind of person, always doing the same kind of thing, then we are thinking of them as 'stereotypes'—one character can stand as an example for the whole group. But once we meet one of these people in a real book, either in a true story about his life or in a fiction story book, we know that he is an individual. He stands out as a personality against a background made up of many other individuals, not just as the symbol of a particular group.

"The books in the following list will bring close to you the boys and girls and men and women who help to make up America. They come from all kinds of homes and all kinds of backgrounds."