Housing Diversity in Children’s Literature

Carla Earhart, PhD, CFCS
Professor, Residential Property Management
Department of Family & Consumer Sciences
Ball State University, Muncie IN

Previous studies have examined diversity in children’s literature: gender diversity, racial diversity, religious diversity, diversity in family composition, etc. This project examines an often-overlooked issue in children’s literature...

HOUSING DIVERSITY

In the stories they read and the accompanying images, children need to see a variety of housing environments. Renting an apartment is an increasingly popular housing option for many families. However, many books glamorize living in a traditional house.

Using a rubric designed by the instructor, students in a university Housing class evaluated the “housing message” in a convenience sample of children’s books. Students then partnered with apartment industry leaders to purchase copies of the most “apartment friendly” books and donated them to preschools, elementary schools, and community libraries in the local area.

Some of our favorite children’s book series that portray apartments in a positive way:

• Riverside Kids series by Johanna Hurwitz, Illustrated by Debbie Tilley
• Zapato Power series by Jacqueline Jules, Illustrated by Miguel Benítez

Some of our favorite books that address a variety of housing options in a positive way:

• ABC Book of American Homes by Michael Shoulders, Illustrated by Sarah S. Brannen
• The City Kid & the Suburb Kid by Deb Pilutti, illustrated by Linda Bleck

• Busybody Nora by Joy Cowley, Illustrated by Brian Wildsmith
• Zapato Power series by Jacqueline Jules, Illustrated by Miguel Benítez
• ABC Book of American Homes by Michael Shoulders, Illustrated by Sarah S. Brannen
• The City Kid & the Suburb Kid by Deb Pilutti, illustrated by Linda Bleck