

# The Selection of English Picture Books for Primary Schools under the Consciousness of Cultural Subjects

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## Abstract

English picture book teaching, which is suitable for the development level of students' thinking, can subconsciously cultivate primary school students' cultural subject consciousness, and lay a solid foundation for understanding multiculturalism and enriching their own culture. It is of great significance to use English picture book teaching to cultivate students' cultural subject consciousness. This paper combines the actual teaching, around the English picture book how to choose this difficult problem, discusses how to choose picture books, how to use English picture books to enhance students' cultural subject consciousness; how to expand the picture book resources through multiple channels, etc.; these will be ready for English picture book teaching, this paper aims to how to provide students with richer cultural nurturing picture book curriculum resources, and share with you the actual operation experience.

## Keywords

Picture Books; Cultural Subject Consciousness; Picture Book Selection; Picture Book Teaching Resource Base.

## 1. The Importance of Carrying Out English Picture Book Teaching in Primary Schools

English picture book teaching, which is suitable for the development level of students' thinking, can gradually promote primary school students' sense of cultural connotation.

First of all, children's English picture books are created from the perspective of children, in line with children's thinking, which can make students resonate with the story and identify with social culture. Secondly, children's English picture books attract students' attention with its unique advantages: graphic presentation, vivid and meaningful story situations; all of these are conducive to students' understanding of complex cultural contexts, perceiving abstract cultural concepts, and feeling the cultural attitudes and stances behind the English words. In addition, English picture books are not only about reading stories and learning knowledge, but more importantly, they allow readers to understand the values and attitudes it conveys and absorb cultural nourishment through the effective carrier of picture books. Become a cultural inheritor and achieve socialization. At the same time, children's English picture book reading teaching activities provide a practical way to improve students' self-confidence in learning and language learning. It can greatly promote the development of students' cognitive-emotional and learning attitudes, and promote the healthy growth of students' body and mind. Picture book teaching has also become a hot research topic in elementary school English, but in actual teaching, most teachers face the problem of difficult to choose English picture books. Our school has carried out research on this topic.

## **2. Teaching English Picture Books Subconsciously Cultivates Primary School Students' Awareness of Cultural Subjects, and Lays a Solid Foundation for Understanding Multiculturalism and Enriching Their Own Cultures.**

In the process of foreign language learning, focusing on the inheritance and development of Chinese outstanding culture is not simply excluding other outstanding cultures. The exchange of ideas, the collision and absorption of cultures, these are also beneficial to the development of culture. [ii] Undoubtedly, in today's integrated and diversified world, it is impossible for us to close ourselves off from the rest of the world, and we have to embrace a wide range of rich cultural materials from all over the world. However, if we blindly provide our students with a variety of cultures, we are not enriching our students but rather giving them mixed concepts. We must understand foreign cultures on the basis of the subjectivity and uniqueness of our own national culture, rather than blindly identifying with or imitating foreign cultures, which may affect or replace our own traditional culture. To sum up, the teaching of English picture books is the most effective, the most realistic and the least disturbing cultural education for building up cultural confidence and strengthening the sense of cultural identity at an early age.

The importance of cultivating students' cultural subject consciousness Understanding of Chinese and foreign cultures and appreciation of outstanding cultures, cross-cultural cognition, attitudes and behavioral choices. These are all manifestations of cultural consciousness. Cultivating cultural awareness helps students enhance their sense of family and country and community of human destiny, cultivate their character, and improve their civilization and social responsibility. Cultural awareness has been written into the English curriculum standard as one of the core literacies of the English subject.

Cultivating cultural awareness is to enable students to understand the outstanding civilization achievements of different countries, compare the similarities and differences between Chinese and foreign cultures, develop cross-cultural communication and exchange skills, form healthy and uplifting aesthetic tastes and correct values, deepen the understanding and recognition of Chinese culture, and establish an international outlook and firm cultural self-confidence. [iii] This shows us the importance of cultivating cultural awareness in English teaching.

To address the issue of cultural education in English language teaching, a national document states that primary and secondary school curricula and teaching materials should systematically and comprehensively implement the education of Chinese excellent traditional culture. Carrying out the education of Chinese excellent traditional culture in primary and secondary schools is of great significance for upholding the common ideals and beliefs of the Chinese nation, building up cultural self-confidence, and cultivating young people to be upright Chinese [iv].

The subjective consciousness of culture is to stand on the subjective position of one's own culture. When accepting foreign cultures, one should insist on the subjectivity of one's own culture. One must penetrate deeply into one's own cultural soil, and constantly make conscious scrutiny of one's traditional culture. At the same time, there should be innovation and abandonment of traditional culture [v].

## **3. Problems Facing Picture Book Teaching in Elementary Schools**

After more than two years of practice and research, we find that elementary school English picture book teaching, as a beautiful vision, still has certain difficulties in its implementation. First of all, elementary school English class time is limited, how to supplement the picture book resources in the context of less curriculum time. Secondly, it is difficult to choose English picture books. How to choose picture books is a difficult problem in front of us. There are three main

reasons for this: firstly, the school has limited funds and the price of original picture books is too high, resulting in a lack of picture book resources. Secondly, the cognitive level and language ability of the students in the class were different. It is difficult to select picture books that are suitable for their respective developmental levels. The content is too simple and lacks reading challenge. The content is too difficult to understand. At the same time, there is no correct selection standard and method for choosing picture books. It is difficult to adapt to students' language development level.

## **4. Selection of Cultural Education Picture Books**

### **4.1. Selecting Graded Cultural Education Picture Books According to Students' Cognitive Development Level**

In teaching, we use the published or existing series of graded English picture books at home and abroad, taking into account students' learning interests, cognitive development characteristics and language level, and referring to the "English Graded Reading Standards for Chinese Primary and Secondary School Students (Experimental Draft)". Among them, we find appropriate picture book resources for teaching at the corresponding level, such as "Chinese Style-English Graded Reading", "Oxford English Words for China" and other picture book resources [vi].

In terms of material selection, according to the age characteristics and physical and mental development of students, in the lower primary grades, we choose to select picture books with large pictures, bright colors, few words, easy-to-understand content, close to students' lives, interesting plots and vivid language. Texts with few words, dialogues, high repetition of phrases, and realistic and catchy language are preferred. In the upper primary grades, we choose English picture books that are richly illustrated with vivid details, fewer pictures and more words, and appropriate descriptive language passages. The content should be broader and culturally rich. The genres of picture books are gradually diversifying. At this stage, problem-driven and task-based teaching is the main focus, and a variety of teaching activities help students to build up cultural awareness while learning the language and laying a foundation for further learning. [vii].

### **4.2. Selecting Cultural Education Picture Book Resources based on the Topics of the Main Textbook**

We analyzed the unit integration of the new standard English textbooks used in our city (by the Foreign Studies Association) and established the language topics of each module. We categorized and organized the language learning topics and knowledge, and combined them with the topic item list of the Chinese English Graded Reading Standards for Primary and Secondary School Students (Experimental Draft), we made language topic cards. According to the content of the theme cards, we collect English picture book reading resources that are suitable for students' reading level, consider cultural appropriateness in the process of collection, and then summarize and organize them to form a picture book resource library. The following are the contents of the three themes we have organized that are of interest to students.

#### **4.2.1. Sorting Out the Teaching Contents of the Textbook with the Theme of "Festivals" and Choosing Related Picture Book Resources Accordingly.**

Primary school students are interested in festivals and related activities. In the teaching design of Chinese New Year in Grade 1, we introduce the English picture book "The Beast of the Year" at the right time. We introduce the story of the New Year's Beast so that students can learn about traditional Chinese culture in class and tell the story to their parents after class. Then we acted out the story in the club debriefing class to deepen the understanding of the characters.

When learning about the Western holiday Thanksgiving Day, prepare relevant English materials about Qingming Festival in advance; after learning about Thanksgiving Day, ask students: "Do you know our Thanksgiving Day in China ? (Do you know our Thanksgiving Day in China ?). Transition to the topic about Qingming Festival, share the English expressions of Qingming Festival and various customs, etc. Let students feel the collision of two different cultures and their commonalities in learning.

In the teaching of the sixth grade module about festivals, we break the routine practice of teaching the textbook by integrating the content of the unit and redrafting the theme of the unit. After analyzing the content of the textbook and the students' knowledge, learning ability and psychological characteristics, we established the theme of the module as Festivals, with the following sub-topics: Period 1: Western Festivals; Period 2: Chinese Festivals; Period 3: My favorite festivals. The first lesson introduces western festivals and related customs. In the second lesson, we introduce the Chinese New Year in the Oxford English Talking China English Picture Book Series as the focus of learning. Let students understand the origin of Chinese New Year and its customs, perceive traditional Chinese culture, and penetrate the cultural subject awareness in teaching activities. [viii] Finally, students are asked to talk about their favorite festivals, so that they can absorb the excellent cultural elements and establish cultural awareness through the presentation of teaching activities and internalization by students.

#### **4.2.2. Sorting Out the Teaching Contents of the Textbook on the Theme of "Characters" and Supplementing Related Picture Book Resources.**

Attention to historical figures is also a hot topic in students' learning. Module 7 of the second book of the sixth grade of the New Standard English (together) introduces Helen Keller, a famous American historical figure. We utilize the contents of Helen Keller in the picture book "Who Was the World's Famous People Selected Biographies Series" to expand the introduction of the character, so that the students can understand the background of the character in depth, and the children can read the biographies of the famous people from childhood to enable them to stand on the shoulders of giants and look at life in the real world. Reading biographies of famous people at an early age will enable them to look at life from the shoulders of giants and realize some time-honored historical laws in the experiences of real people.

We utilize the sixth part of the homework "Draw, write and report." to carry out the activity of letting students design their own Chinese and foreign celebrity cards. In the process of making their own cards, students were asked to learn about the lives and stories of famous people in history, including Confucius and Laozi, influential historical figures in the region: Mr. Zhang Daqian, a cultural celebrity and painter who is well known both at home and abroad; and Yang Liwei, a space hero who contributed to China's aerospace industry. In the process of sorting out the characters, students understand and feel the charm of characters.

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