Immigrant Narratives: Power, Difference, and Representation in Young-Adult Novels with Immigrant Protagonists

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Abstract

As of 2008, about 23% of children in the United States were immigrants or the children of immigrants. This paper examines how immigrants are portrayed in books aimed at teenagers. From a sample of 20 young-adult novels we look at the demographics of both protagonist and author and examine how three main themes are addressed: 1) experiences prior to immigration, 2) journeys of immigration, and 3) adjustments due to immigration. Finally, we explore how the issues of power, difference, and representation play out in these immigrant narratives.

Keywords

multicultural literature, immigration, youth

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