

Social Issues Book Club List

This list has been last updated in December 2018

This list contains a variety of children's literature, covering a wide array of social issues. These books were selected because the characters in the stories reflect the diversity of cultures and languages of students in our classrooms. The list was created with upper elementary classrooms in mind. However, some of the books are appropriate for lower elementary and the higher reading level books are also appropriate for middle school. Some of the books are either entirely in English, or in English but with words in other languages. Many of the books are available in English and Spanish

The list is organized by reading levels and then by author for ease of navigation. The list also includes a short description and the language(s) of the books.

Book	Author	Reading Level	Description	Language
Al Fin en Casa /Home at Last	Susan Middleton Elya	L	When Ana's family comes to the U.S., she can tell that her mother misses their life and family in Mexico terribly. Her mom doesn't speak English, and she relies on Ana and her husband to translate.	Available in Spanish and English
My names is Maria Isabel/ Me llamo María Isabel	Alma Flor Ada	N	María Isabel Salazar Lopez, is a Puerto Rican girl starting in a new school. She was named after her two grandmothers. On the first day at her new school, her teacher decides to call her Mary Lopez instead of using María Isabel. Throughout the book, María Isabel struggles with the change.	Available in Spanish and English Translanguaging Spanish-English
Los Cien Vestidos /The Hundred Dresses	Eleanor Estes	O	Wanda's classmates make fun of her Polish name and her one faded dress. She tells them that she owns 100 dresses and enters drawings of them in the school's art contest before she moves away.	Available in Spanish and English

			Only after she is gone do the students discover her remarkable talent and realize how cruel they have been.	
Los Discos de mi Abuela (Grandma's Records)	Eric Velazques	O	The author describes his boyhood summers spent at his grandmother's apartment in Spanish Harlem, where she introduced him to the sounds and steps of the merengue and the conga and told him stories of Puerto Rico.	Available in Spanish and English
Honeysuckle House	Cheng, Andrea	P	A Chinese-American girl is paired up in school with an immigrant girl from China. At first, she doesn't think that they have much in common, but they eventually manage to connect their stories and forge a friendship.	
La Mariposa/ The Butterfly	Francisco Jimenez	P	In his first year of school, Francisco understands little of what his teacher says. The book shares the account of a schoolchild's struggle to learn a new language.	Available in Spanish and English
The Year of the Dog	Grace Lin	Q	When Pacy's mom tells her that the year of the dog is a good year for friends, family, and "finding herself," Pacy begins searching for herself right away. As the year goes on, she struggles to find her talent and deals with disappointment.	
Gaby, Perdida y Encontrada (Gaby Lost and Found)	Angela Cervantes	R	Gaby Ramirez Howard loves volunteering at the local animal shelter. Her mother has recently been deported to Honduras and Gaby is stuck living with her inattentive dad. (how do you spell it?)	Available in Spanish and English
How Tia Lola Came to (visit) Stay	Julia Alvarez	R	Miguel moves to Vermont after his parents' divorce, and then Tia Lola arrives to help his mother from the Dominican Republic.	Available in Spanish and English

				Translanguaging Spanish-English
Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes / Sadako y las mil grullas de papel	Eleanor Coerr	R	Based on a true story, this book shared the story of Sadako, a child gravely ill with leukemia, the "atom bomb disease". Recalling a Japanese legend, that if a sick person folds one thousand cranes, the gods will grant her wish and make her healthy again, Sadako sets to work folding paper cranes.	Available in Spanish and English.
De Como Tía Lola Aprendió a Enseñar (How Aunt Lola Learned to Teach)	Julia Alvarez	R	In order to help Tía Lola feel less lonely while her niece Linda is at work and her great niece Juanita and great nephew Miguel are at school, the family comes up with the idea to have Tía Lola become a school volunteer.	Available in Spanish and English Translanguaging Spanish-English
Serafina's Promise	Ann E. Burg	S	Serafina wants to go to school and become a doctor, but in her rural village in Haiti, many obstacles stand in Serafina's way. The family has little money and she has many chores that she needs to do.	Translanguaging Haitian- Creole/English
In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson	Bette Bao Lord	S	The story of Shirley, an immigrant girl from China who arrives to Brooklyn when Jackie Robinson, the star of the Brooklyn Dodgers, is everyone's hero.	Translanguaging Chinese-English
El Color de Mis Palabras	Lynn Joseph	S	Ana Rosa is a 12-year-old writer growing up in the Dominican Republic. She finds inspiration all around her. She watches her brother search for a future, learn to dance and to love, and find out what it means to be part of a community. Ana Rosa finds the power of her words.	Available in Spanish and English Translanguaging Spanish-English
The Star Fisher	Laurence Yep	S	15-year-old Joan Lee is a child of two worlds. In 1927, as a Chinese American, she faces prejudice in West Virginia. Only Miss Lucy, their landlord and neighbor, seems welcoming.	

Eagles Song	Joseph Bruchac	S	Danny Bigtree's family has moved to Brooklyn, New York, and he doesn't feel that he fits in at school. He's homesick for the Mohawk reservation, and the kids in his class tease him about being an Indian.	Translanguaging in Mohawk
Taking Sides	Gary Soto	S	Lincoln is in a jam when his basketball team at his new school--where the students are rich and mostly white--faces his old team from the barrio on the boards. How can he play his best against his friends? No matter who wins, it looks like it will be lose-lose for Lincoln.	Available in Spanish and English Translanguaging in Spanish.
Amina's Voice	Hena Khan	S	Amina has never been comfortable in the spotlight. She is happy just hanging out with her best friend, Soojin. Except now that she's in middle school, everything feels different. But then, the local mosque is vandalized and she feels devastated.	
Drita, My Homegirl	Jenny Lombard	T	The story of a ten-year-old from Kosovo who starts a new school in the United States. She has to learn English and make new friends.	Available in Albanian and English Translanguaging Albanian-English
Kira Kira	Cynthia Kadohata	T	Katie and her family move from a Japanese community in Iowa to the Deep South of Georgia. Her sister Lynn has a special way of viewing the world and helps Katie adapt to their new place, but then Lynn becomes very ill.	Translanguaging Japanese-English
Esperanza Rising	Pam Muñoz Ryan	V	Esperanza, a wealthy child in Mexico, thought that she'd always live with her family on their ranch. But a sudden tragedy forces Esperanza and her	Available in Spanish and English

			mother to flee to California during the Great Depression.	Translanguaging Spanish-English
Becoming Naomi Leon	Pam Muñoz Ryan	V	When Naomi's absent mother resurfaces to claim her, Naomi runs away to Oaxaca, Mexico with her great-grandmother and younger brother in search of her father.	Available in Spanish and English Translanguaging Spanish-English
Shooting in Kabul	N.H. Senzai		In the summer of 2001, twelve-year-old Fadi's family has to leave Afghanistan and move to the United States. During the move, they are separated from his little sister.	Uses words in Arabic and Pukhto (Pashto)
Estrella en el Bosque/ Star in the Forest	Laura Resau	V	Zitlatly and her friend find a runaway dog in the forest near the trailer park. They name it Star because the dog has a patch over its eye that looks like a star. After a while, Zitlatly believes that Star is the "spirit animal" of her father, who was deported back to Mexico after being arrested for speeding.	Available in Spanish and English. Translanguaging Spanish/English
Inside out and Back Again	Thanhha Lai	U	The story of a girl who has to leave Vietnam during the war and moves to Alabama.	Translanguaging Vietnamese-English
Baseball in April and other stories /Beisbol in abril y otras historias	Gary Soto	U	A collection of eleven short stories, focusing on the everyday adventures of Mexican-American children growing up in California.	Available in Spanish and English Translanguaging Spanish/English
House on Mango Street / La casa en Mango street	Sandra Cisneros	W	The story of Esperanza Cordero, a young Latina girl growing up in Chicago who is figuring out who she is and who she wants to become	Available in Spanish and English. Translanguaging Spanish/ English
Number the stars/ ¿Quién cuenta las estrellas?	Lois Lowry	U	A novel set during WWII tells the story of a brave ten-year-old Danish girl who helps her family smuggle her Jewish friends to safety in Sweden.	Available in Spanish and English.

Julie of the Wolves	Jean Craighead-George	U	Miyax, a 13-year-old Eskimo girl and an orphan, runs away hoping to reach San Francisco and her pen pal. But she becomes lost in the Alaskan tundra and meets a pack of wolves.	Translanguaging Eskimo-English
El Deafo	Cece Bell	N/A	Cece is starting at a new school and is scared. Even more so with a giant hearing aid strapped to her chest. At her old school, everyone in Cece's class was deaf. In her new school, she is different.	English
Felita	Nicholasa Mohr	N/A	Eight-year-old Felita lives in Harlem with her family. Her parents have decided that they will be moving to a new neighborhood that is a long walk from her current neighborhood. The novel addresses issues of racism, discrimination, and prejudice that come up when Felita moves to a new neighborhood that is predominantly Irish and German.	Available in Spanish and English. Translanguaging Spanish-English
La calle es libre/ The Street is Free	Kurusa Monika Doppert	N/A	The children don't have a place to play. They demand a playground from the town and organize the community to build it.	Available in Spanish and English.
La composición	Antonio Skarmeta	N/A	This book shares the story of a child who is ordered to write a paper about his family by the government during a dictatorship.	Available in Spanish and English
Friend from the Other Side/ Amigos del Otro Lado	Gloria Anzaldua	N/A	This book is about the friendship between two children. One of them who has crossed the Mexican Border escaping poverty	Bilingual Spanish/ English