

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Humans create literary works as a reflection of something happening in society. Klarer (2004) states that literature is a voice that conveys thoughts and expresses feelings, opinions, and statements in society through language as a means (1). Literature is the result of human work in writing or orally. Literature is a way to express feelings, thoughts, opinions, and experiences that humans feel. For children, literature can help them understand their identities, communities, and world. Literature can be a medium for children to know the stories about other children in far-away places, sometimes in the past, or about children whose lives are similar to their own.

Children's literature is created as attractive and uses simple language that is easy to understand by children. Therefore, children can enjoy the literary works as well as understand the meaning contained in the story. According to Hunt (3), literature summarizes human life with societal traditions, such as children's stories, songs, and games. Nowadays, children's literature is growing faster all around the world. The authors began to create children's literature with storylines related to children's daily life. There are many kinds of children's literature sub-genre, one of them is the picture book.

The picture book is one of sub-genre in children's literature. This sub-genre is a story written for children in which the illustrations and text work together to explain the story. Picture books are typically read to children rather than by children. They are intended for children who cannot yet read and assist them in developing a sense of storytelling, storyline, and language awareness. Every picture book page is illustrated to gain the story comprehension and teach that words have meaning.

In addition, picture books and comics are different. The picture book is a literary work that uses language to convey the story's contents to the reader. On the other hand, comics are not literary works. Comics use images as a medium to tell the story to the readers. Comics prioritize images rather than the dialogue shown in the story. The illustration is the main difference between picture books and comics. According to Philip Nel, it is not necessary to picture books to apply comics storytelling because picture books and comics have different way to tell their contents (446). Picture books follow a traditional narrative form, with the words describing the action and setting rather than allowing the images to speak for themselves. However, in comics, images are essential in moving the story forward.

Picture books can also use pictures to create stories. Usually, in comics, the image is part of a more dominant the whole story. It can be seen from a set of panels in a series or several pages in a comic. The picture books tend to be completely separated as words tell the main story, there are a few bonus pictures to add to the fun, or pictures tell a story without words being needed. There are

several differences between picture books and comics such as, the use of panels between pages, thought and speech, bubbles between italics, and quotes.

Children's literature prioritizes moral messages, life values, and behavioral guidelines in presenting stories. Those moral values will explicitly change children's perspectives as readers through the stories and characters created in the stories. In addition, children's literature reflects a way of life that children can understand and describes the feelings and thoughts of children. On the other hand, picture books as a sub-genre of literature can raise an attitude of acceptance and celebration in the reader's character towards minority groups in the USA. It can give readers a high sense of tolerance. Children's picture books can also teach readers about life experiences, various problems, and how to deal with them.

Picture books encourage children to use imagination and better understand themselves and others. However, children's picture books with multicultural themes reflect the current situation in American society. It is the author's attempt at accepting the diversity of groups in American society. Readers can learn to respect cultural, racial, and religious diversity. Children's literature serves as a place for children to learn about the differences around them. Children's picture books with multicultural themes teach readers that diversity is not a barrier to live side by side in peace and harmony.

The authors and illustrators of picture books highlight the acceptance and celebrations of minority groups in American society. Through literary works, readers can see diversity as an attitude of mutual acceptance, celebration, and

respect for one another. Therefore, the writer chooses eight children's picture books as research objects.

The eight picture books the writer chooses as the research object have the same issues to be analyzed in this study. Those books are *I am Whole*, *Paletero Man*, *Different Like Me*, *Mommy's Khimar*, *Lailah's Lunchbox*, *Our Favorite Day of the Year*, *Our Diversity Makes Us Stronger*, and *My Food, Your Food*. Those books have the same cultural, racial, and religious diversity issues. The books highlight the diversity of groups that respect each other. In addition, those books show the stories of minority groups in the USA. Those books emphasize an attitude of acceptance and celebration of minority group. Therefore, those books have similarities, so the writer can easily divide each book into several categories, including cultural, racial, and religious diversity. On the other hand, those books are a medium for readers to learn about embracing diversity.

The first picture book that the writer chooses as the object of research is *I Am Whole*, written by Shola Oz and illustrated by Shifa Annisa and published on December 13, 2020. A young girl who was born to be a mix of different races. The girl grew up with a multiracial family. The best part of her life is a mixed race. She does not have to choose this or that. She felt lucky to be a part of them. She has mixed cultures in all the best ways. This charming picture book celebrates children from diverse backgrounds and cultures. This book shows the reader to celebrate the diversity that comes with being multiracial, such as language, family, and cultural traditions. The pictures and the dialogue represent multicultural families with various appearances and ceremonies. This heart-

warming picture book encourages young readers to embrace their uniqueness, values, and diverse cultures. This book is especially significant for multicultural or mixed-race because it reinforces the idea that they do not have to identify with just one aspect of who they are. They can appreciate and cherish the entirety of who they are. This book teaches children to enjoy their differences and recognize the value of such distinctions.

Paletero Man was written by Lucky Diaz and illustrated by Micah Player. This book was published on June 1, 2021. A boy is strolling around in Los Angeles on a hot summer's day looking for Paletero José, an iced cart seller with cool treats. As he left, he greeted the other friends of various races selling their goods on the streets. Arriving there, the boy was surprised because there was no money in his pocket. The friends he greeted saw the coins fall as he ran. They took it, then followed and gave the cash to the boy. Gladly the boy managed to meet Paletero José and buy popsicles. In this book, the author introduces the Latino neighborhoods that happen in Los Angeles. This book also uses two languages, English and Spanish, in their dialogue. This book is helpful to read because this book explores another culture from a different country. It means the book wants to embrace multiculturalism in USA society.

Different Like Me, by Xochitl Dixon and illustrated by Bonnie Lui published on June 17, 2020. A group of children of various races was gathered in the garden. They work together to help a giant fish balloon fly. The difference is very striking when viewed from the physical only. The children celebrate their differences and find what they have in. They remind readers that we are all part of

God's wonderful creation, however different we are. This book is an excellent teaching tool for emphasizing the importance of accepting one's differences and accepting oneself as the unique individual God created. This book is stunning and desperately needed. The author shows the readers how children embrace the diversities of race. The lovely illustration of this book shows that children learn from what they see and observe.

Mommy's Khimar this charming and imaginative picture book, written and illustrated by Jamilah Tompkins-Bigelow and Ebony Glenn, was published by Simon and Schuster on April 3, 2018. A young Muslim girl spends a busy day wrapped in her mother's colorful headscarf. She has to use khimar every day when going out of the house. She met her neighbor, who is a Christian. The neighbor praised her. The girl and mom-mom live as neighbors with religious diversity. It is portrayal of a young Muslim American girl's life features endearing and colorful graphics that highlight the beauty of the diverse and accepting community.

Lailah's Lunchbox by Reem Faruqi and illustrated by Lea Lyon were published on May 15, 2015. Lailah is a new student a thousand miles away from her old home and misses her old friends. When Ramadan begins, she is excited that she is finally old enough to fast and worried that her classmates would not understand why she does not join them in the lunchroom. Lailah solves her problem with the help of the school librarian and her teacher. She discovers that she can make new friends who respect her beliefs. This book teaches readers to

respect the beliefs of others and how to deal with differences with a high sense of tolerance.

Our Favorite Day of the Year by A.E. Ali and illustrated by Rahele Jomepour Bell, published on June 30, 2020. Musa is nervous about his first day of school. He is not used to being away from home and has no idea who the other students in his class are. Musa is not sure he will have much in common with classmates Moisés, Mo, and Kevin. But, as the year progresses, the four boys learn more about each other, the holidays they celebrate, their favorite foods, and what they enjoy about school. This book can teach readers to respect each other's beliefs.

Our Diversity Makes Us Stronger by Elizabeth Cole and illustrated by Julia Kamenshikova, published on October 07, 2021. Nick wears blue glasses to school. He was worried that the other kids might not like his appearance. On the way to school, a classmate wearing new braces comments that Nick's glasses look cool. It makes Nick wonder if being different would not be so bad. He looks around and realizes that we are all different in some unique way. From this vantage point, the world is full of incredible diversity, from skin color to religion, hobbies, and special needs. It is not about how we differ, but we are diverse. Diversity is about accepting one another's differences. In this book, the reader will learn the beauty of difference and understands that our diversity is our strength. On the other hand, this book teaches us to love diversity, be tolerant of others who are different and embrace and love ourselves for who we are.

The last book, *My Food, Your Food* by Lisa Bullard and illustrated by Christine M. Schneider, was published on January 1, 2015. Manuel's class is celebrating Culinary Week. Each student describes something special that their family eats. Manuel discovers that different families have different food traditions. Some people eat their noodles with chopsticks. Others employ a fork. Some families consume flatbread. Others consume puffy bread. Diverse students compare and contrast their lives to those of their friends and neighbors to discover similarities and differences between people and cultures. These informational fiction books are enjoyable for children due to their kid-friendly text and appealing illustrations. This book shows how to embrace the diversity of tradition through food. This book teaches readers, especially children, that every family has a unique variety of food.

According to research entitled "Discrimination in America: Experiences and Views", minority groups often face racial discrimination, intolerance, xenophobia, and other forms of prejudice in USA society. It makes American literature mostly raises the story of a minority group living in the USA. This study discusses how children's picture books can promote and celebrate diversity in USA society. In addition, children's picture books as a medium to highlight the challenges faced by minority groups in a multiculturalism society. This challenge can be seen in picture books highlighting social issues faced by minority groups and promoting the acceptance of diversity in the USA. It is intended that with the creation of children's picture books with multicultural themes, this diversity will be better known in general by readers. Therefore, the writer chooses this topic for

research. This topic also has the potential to describe acceptance and efforts to promote diversity, tolerance, and acceptance of minority groups in the USA. This topic will raise knowledge about the phenomenon of children's literature which highlights the experience and diversity reflected in picture books. In this research, the writer will try to reveal, explore, and describe the acceptance of racial, cultural, and religious diversity in children's books to readers.

The writer hopes this research will gain more knowledge about the social problems faced by minority groups and the efforts made by literary creators to promote and acceptance of diversity in USA society. Therefore, the writer applies the sociological theory by Alan Swingewood. The writer applies multiculturalism as an approach in this study. The writer hopes this research can help readers get more information and learn about social issues against minority groups in the USA. Thus, readers can understand that the authors created children's picture books with multicultural themes as one of the efforts to promote the acceptance of minority groups in the USA. Therefore, the title of this research is **“The Acceptance of Diversity in the USA Depicted in Selected Contemporary Children's Picture Books”**.

1.2 Identification of the Problem

According to Fredrik Barth, in his book entitled *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference*. He argues that ethnic groups can introduce their own new cultural identities, even if their old identities are obsolete (9). Each ethnic group has a culture that is different from other tribes

and has customary solid rules. The issue of ethnicity is a crucial issue for USA society.

The writer chooses eight selected children's picture books that have multiculturalism values as the object of research. In eight selected picture books, the writer finds some problems. Those books focus on the racial diversity and cultural diversity in the USA's society. However, the writer also points out the differences in identities, such as traditions, religions, ethnicities, and races. Thus, the books show children's interactions in a society surrounded by mutual respect.

In addition, the writer wants to show that the characters created by the authors in those books are reflecting of the current social conditions of the USA. Those books highlighted racial diversity, cultural diversity and religion. In this study, the writer wants to analyze the multiculturalism that happen in picture books to accept racial diversity, cultural diversity and religion in USA society. It can be seen from the authors' and illustrators' works of multicultural figures shown in each of their books.

1.3 Reviews of Related Studies

In this research, the writer analyzes the racial diversity and acceptance of multiculturalism in USA society. There are four journals and one thesis that discuss multiculturalism. It would help the writer to understand better what multiculturalism is in the USA society that could be seen through picture books.

The writer uses several previous research results as sources or references to support this research. The first one is a journal article written by Lee, Y., et al (2014) entitled "Evaluating Cultural Authenticity in Multicultural Picture Books:

A Collaborative Analysis for Diversity Education." in *The University of Chicago Press Journals*. The study discusses the issue of cultural authenticity, which is reflected in multicultural picture books, to provide a new direction for education about diversity for children. This research was conducted by analyzing cultural authenticity as a standard for evaluating multicultural picture books to give new instruction in diversity education for children. This journal article takes a different approach to the writer's analysis. This research focuses on cultural authenticity as a common method of evaluating multicultural picture books in order to provide new teaching in diversity education for student. However, this journal article helps the writer to analyze multicultural literature contained in picture books. This study is related to the writer's analysis.

The second study is a thesis by Vannesa Khairifa Sefra (2021) entitled "Embracing Cultural Diversity to Fight Racism against African-Americans as Reflected in Selected Multicultural Children's Picture Books." This thesis describes how picture books can combat the racism often accepted by African-Americans and embrace the culture of American society. In this thesis, the author mentions that picture books by the authors and illustrators reflect cultural diversity in the picture books they create. She uses sociological theory by Alan Swingewood. This thesis is different from the writer's. This thesis focuses on the types of racism faced by African Americans. However, the writer's analysis focuses on multiculturalism in USA society. This thesis helps the writer to understand better, step by step, how to analyze a literary work based on a

sociological theory using a multiculturalism approach and how to elaborate on it well.

The third one is a journal article written by Athar Haj Yahya (2021) entitled "Between particularism and pluralism: children's literature as a multicultural agent" in *Social Identities Journal for the Study of Race, Nation, and Culture*. This article examines Israeli children's literature as reflected through two programs. The official libraries established by the Israeli government are the Lantern Library (for Arabic readers) and the Pajama Library (for Hebrew readers). This study contains an analysis of the aim and content of particularist (an approach that emphasizes the unique characteristics of a cultural group and maintains its identity) versus pluralist (it is an approach of cultural tolerance and respect and encourages inter-group dialogue). This journal article has a different analysis from the writer's. This journal article employs Israeli children's literature as its analysis material. In addition, this journal article helps the writer understand and analyze children's literature.

The findings of this study indicate that inequality is discovered in various fields. Palestinian-Arab children learn more about Jewish culture than their own. However, multicultural education is created for students with different cultural backgrounds. It means the students can experience an equal education with other students. Nowadays, literature has a role as socialization in society in teaching moral values. It is the first step in implementing normative and moral education in a social environment, especially for children (Yahya 3). The result of this research

identified that Children's literature could be a term to create a multicultural dialogue that respects each other.

The fourth is journal article by Susan A Colby and Anna F Lyon (2004) entitled "Heightening Awareness about the Importance of Using Multicultural Literature." in the *Educational Resources Information Center*. This journal article contains teachers' understanding of the use of multicultural literature in schools. The author mentions the importance of using literature in schools by describing various cultures and themes as teaching materials. Multicultural literature can teach variegated diversity to teachers and students to see the wide world through reading multicultural literature. Multicultural literature supports children in recognizing their own cultures. It introduces other cultures to children to express opinions about diversity (Colby and Lyon 24). The author uses children's literature to introduce variety to students. This research helps the writer discover children's responses to literary works with cultural values. This study is different from the writer's because it examines the role of the teacher in directly introducing the results of the employment of multicultural literature in school.

The fifth related study is a journal article by Yuko Iwai (2017) entitled "Multicultural Children's Literature and Teacher Candidates' Awareness and Attitudes Toward Cultural Diversity." in the *International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education*. In this article, she says that multicultural literature can help students and teachers see the world from different perspectives. Multicultural literature is a literary work that can provide knowledge about cultural differences and understand other people's cultures by respecting them. According to the

author, multicultural literature can increase the awareness of readers, especially children, regarding culture, ethnicity, and religion. Multicultural literature also cultivates one's understanding.

The result of this research is that multicultural literature is still lacking as teaching material for children at school. The teachers did not pay enough attention to the diversity of students and did not integrate the issue of diversity into their teaching. Such an attitude of educators towards multicultural education will harm students (186). It means that the teacher's lack of knowledge of multicultural children's literature causes them to lack an understanding of true diversity. Children with different backgrounds may not get the same good services at school. This research made teachers want to add multicultural children's literature to their learning curriculum. It is accomplished by building relationships with children about differences in diversity. This study has differences from the writer. This study demonstrates how multicultural literature is important role in introducing diversity to children through education in schools. This study helps the writer understand society's situation and how multicultural literature influences children's views of diversity.

1.4 Research of the Questions

This research will answer these several questions:

1. How do the selected picture books portray relationships among different races in *I am Whole*, *Paletero Man*, and *Different Like Me*?
2. What attitude does the book have toward cultural diversity and the traditions of the minority groups in *Mommy's Khimar*, *Lailah's Lunchbox*,

Our Favorite Day of the Year, Our Diversity Makes Us Stronger, and My Food, Your Food?

1.5 Scope of the Study

The writer finds some interesting problems to be discussed in this research. The writer will focus on the racial diversity, culture and religious tolerance in multicultural communities in the USA. It is illustrated in eight selected American picture books that introduce children to the diversity of traditions, religions, ethnicities, and mutual respect in the USA.

1.6 Objectives of the Study

This study analyzes the acceptance of racial diversity, cultural diversity, and religious tolerance in the USA society. In addition, this study also identifies the multiculturalism that persists in the USA and how to embrace cultural diversity as an effort to unite differences through multiculturalism books. On the other hand, this research aims to define multiculturalism as a description of the current social conditions in the USA, which is represented in eight selected children's picture books. There are, *I am Whole*, *Paletero Man*, *Different Like Me*, *Mommy's Khimar*, *Lailah's Lunchbox*, *Our Favorite Day of the Year*, *Our Diversity Makes Us Stronger*, and *My Food, Your Food*. The writer hopes the research can enrich readers' understanding of the diversity in the USA through picture books and also know how to embrace the diversity presented in these books.

There are several objectives of this research:

1. This study reveals the racial diversity in society through USA selected picture books in *I am Whole*, *Paletero Man*, and *Different Like Me*.
2. This study reveals the acceptance of cultural diversity and religioun conveyed by the authors through multicultural characters in *Mommy's Khimar*, *Lailah's Lunchbox*, *Our Favorite Day of the Year*, *Our Diversity Makes Us Stronger*, and *My Food, Your Food*.

