



THE ASK PROGRAM

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The ASK program (Authors Specialists and Knowledge) occurs each semester as part of an undergraduate Literature for Children and Youth class. The participants include university students, as well as later elementary through high school students depending on the selected literature work. The purpose of the program is to take readers beyond the confines of a novel, relating the information from their reading in a personal way to their own immediate situation. For as part of the process, readers draw on their own writers' voice, as they journal through their reading.

Interviews are conducted with authors of children's books and with "specialists" whose occupations, interests and experiences bring credibility or a better understanding to a particular literature selection. The interview focus from these books has been on such social issues as ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, homelessness in America, the Vietnam War, media responsibility, racial prejudice and animal rights. In addition to these social issues, through interviewing authors, readers are able to explore such evaluative literary aspects as the development of character, plot, setting, theme and writing style. The following children's books have been selected in past interviews: *The Devil's Arithmetic*, *Charlie Pippin*, *The Watsons Go to Birmingham- 1963*, *Monkey Island*, *Nothing but the Truth*, *Maniac Magee*, *Wringer*, *Circle of Gold*, *Adem's Cross*, *Julie of the Wolves*, *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes*, *Hiroshima*, *Petey*, *Homeless Bird* and *Daniel's Story*. Through the interviewing steps of the ASK program, students develop questions to be asked of either the selected author or specialist. The interviews are held on the university campus or at one of the metropolitan area schools or county teacher centers referred to as Intermediate School Districts (ISD's). Three ASK programs with Newbery authors were presented at the Michigan Reading Association's conference in March of 2000.

Many of the interviews have been conducted using distance learning technology, connecting authors and specialists brought to campus with sites in the metropolitan area. In some instances, university students who have been trained in the program, visit selected schools and work with teachers and their students preparing them for planned interviews. For additional information, please contact Raymond P. Kettel, Associate Professor of Education University of Michigan-Dearborn.