



# Four ways to integrate culturally responsive teaching into the ELA classroom

How can we make our classrooms truly inclusive? As our understanding of true diversity and inclusion deepens, educators are finding new ways to integrate and celebrate their students' cultures in the classroom.

The storytelling that naturally occurs in ELA classrooms makes it the perfect place to explore diverse narratives and empower students to share their experiences.

Here are four ways to make it happen:

## Choose diverse, representative reading material.

Students fall in love with reading when they see themselves reflected in the texts. Educators need reading materials that reflect their students' cultural backgrounds and experiences. Such materials provide students with opportunities to make personal connections with the content in ways that might not exist in a traditional ELA curriculum. Just as importantly, students who are not from the culture being represented can enjoy a window into lives that are different from their own, fostering empathy and curiosity.

### NEWSELA TIP:

*Teachers can easily search by topic or browse curated collections of over 16,000 texts, across 20+ genres, to find the resources they need. When content deals with complex topics, Newsela explains and contextualizes those complexities using simple, clear, and accurate language.*

## Introduce student choice.

There is a connection between reading choice and student engagement and motivation. Educators can facilitate this by providing students with access to a large library of material. An increase in engagement can help improve learning outcomes while also making classrooms more culturally responsive. To take this method even further, students can even discuss their choices, introducing their peers to what they've learned and perhaps sparking their interest in reading other texts themselves.

### NEWSELA TIP:

*Teachers can provide students with structured choice by creating and assigning a Text Set around a specific topic, or guide students to search independently on Newsela for texts. From the platform, students can explore materials from vetted and reputable sources.*



## Ask questions that connect the student to the material.

Student-centered teaching means making ELA discussions personal. One way to accomplish this is asking students about their lives and their community as they relate to the material. This approach gives students an opportunity to share their experiences and encourages all students to reflect critically in a way that could produce new and exciting insights.

### NEWSELA TIP:

*Teachers can use Annotations to scaffold Newsela texts with questions, providing students with an opportunity to draw connections and reflect on their own experiences. Lesson Sparks embedded throughout the platform provide teachers with suggestions on how to lead discussions.*

## Start with writing, then try discussion.

Especially at the beginning of the school year, some students may feel more comfortable opening up about their culture and communities in writing rather than group discussion. Through assignments like this, educators can deepen their own understanding of their students and their communities and use that knowledge to build a safe space for discussion later in the year.

### NEWSELA TIP:

*Teachers can customize Write Prompts with a reflective question, so students have a safe space to explore and share their thinking.*

## Found on Newsela: Content that reflects student experience



ARTS

Colorful fabric structures at Smithsonian explore what home means



ARTS & CULTURE

Defining characteristics of a culture



ARTS & CULTURE

Novel shows how it feels to be the "New Kid" at school