
Peritextual Elements in Chinese Nonfiction Picturebooks

Sunah Chung, Jongsun Wee and Sohyun Meacham

Abstract

The present work is a comparison of the peritext typology found across various nonfiction picturebooks focusing on Chinese people, including Chinese Americans. Nineteen nonfiction books were chosen following selection methods described in previous literature. Books were individually analysed to see which of five categories they fit under, and insider/outsider status for each author and illustrator was recorded as well. All five types were found in the surveyed Chinese nonfiction picturebooks; however, none of the books encouraged readers to take action for social change. We also found slight variation in peritext usage between the insiders and outsiders for authors and illustrators. At face value, the insider/outsider status may naturally seem a primary cause for concern when selecting culturally authentic picturebooks. However, the present study leads to the suggestion that it is perhaps better to examine the peritextual information to evaluate authentic and quality literature on multicultural nonfiction picturebooks as an important factor to consider alongside the author/illustrator's memberships of cultural heritage.

Keywords: Chinese, multicultural, nonfiction, peritext, picture books

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Introduction

The use of nonfiction picturebooks for children has been promoted in literacy education in the United States (Common Core State Standards, 2010), as children typically have little exposure to nonfiction (Duke, 2000), and early exposure has been found to enhance children's understanding of this challenging genre (Moss, 2004). Educators and parents can find quality and appealing nonfiction children's books by searching for R. Sibert Medal winners by the American Library Association (<https://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/sibert>), the Orbis Pictus Award for Outstanding Nonfiction for Children by the National Council of Teachers of English (<https://ncte.org/awards/orbis-pictus-award-nonfiction-for-children/>), and Children's Favourites (formerly called Children's Choices) by the International Literacy Association and the Children's Book Council (<https://www.literacyworldwide.org/get-resources/reading-lists>). Awarded or nominated nonfiction lists can be helpful when identifying high-quality nonfiction. At the same time, educators and parents can also benefit from non-awarded nonfiction picturebooks when they deliver interesting or noteworthy information to readers.

With this paper, we explore whether it could also be helpful to examine the peritextual elements of nonfiction. Peritext refers to elements that are often seen as tangential to the main body of a published work, such as the book cover, the foreword, table of contents, index, and source information (Genette, 1997), for peritextual elements are frequently determined and sometimes crafted by the editor or publisher rather than by the author. Nonetheless, more can be learned about the effectiveness of peritextual elements as a potential tool to provide insights into the authenticity of the text, and findings could be relevant for educational curricula to help children further develop their critical thinking skills. In pursuit of this object, the authors of this study scrutinized peritextual features of 19 nonfiction picturebooks about Chinese people, including Chinese Americans.

Peritextual Elements in Nonfiction Picturebooks

For children, nonfiction picturebooks often provide additional information about the research process of the picturebook creation through peritextual elements, such as introductory comments, endnotes, bibliographies, and further reading lists. Information about the research process, expert consultants, glossaries, indexes, and other supplemental materials and resources are provided in

appealing and engaging styles of visuals and text with accuracy and authenticity (Gill, 2009). Discussing the peritextual elements with children can help them enhance their comprehension and critical thinking skills. Martinez et al. (2016) suggest using peritextual features, such as dust jackets, title pages, and notes for reading in class because the peritextual elements include information that readers can use to better comprehend the content. In a similar finding, Bluestein (2010) states that examining the peritext in nonfiction literature could help children to better comprehend the text and also points out that sometimes the information found in the peritext may not be directly aligned with the book's main content. Likewise, peritexts can help develop readers' critical thinking skills, which helps them to evaluate the credibility of information presented in the books themselves (Gross et al., 2016). Gill (2009) also emphasizes the importance of using multiple sources to evaluate the accuracy and authenticity of children's nonfiction literature.

Peritextual elements also inform readers and scholars of societal or cultural constraints and expectations, authorship, and other relevant resources (Pecoskie & Desrochers, 2013). Indeed, the goal of a peritext is to provide the reader with information that overall reflects the book creators' purpose. Using the information provided in peritextual elements, readers can evaluate the efforts made to preserve the accuracy and authenticity of the content. Wilson (2006) explains that peritextual elements, such as author notes and reference lists, show that 'authors select information on their topic from all the information available to them' (p. 57). Authors' selection of information, and how they synthesize and acknowledge their information sources, allow implications to be made about the research process and critical thinking processes. Therefore, children may benefit if they learn about peritextual elements, what information they can find from these, and how to identify important information to deepen their understanding of the book's main content (Wilson, 2006). In addition to helping children with reading comprehension, examining the peritextual elements can be useful for teachers themselves when selecting nonfiction works for their instructional purposes.

Issues of Accuracy and Authenticity in Chinese Nonfiction Picturebooks

Teacher educators and multicultural literature scholars are concerned about misinformation or inaccurate descriptions of different cultural groups (Durand et al., 2021; Koss et al., 2017; Zhang

& Wang, 2021). Inaccurate or inauthentic representation of a nation and its people can be harmful for readers as they might develop biases or prejudices. Quality multicultural literature should present cultural accuracy, authenticity, and rich detail (Yokota, 1993). To meet this standard of quality, insider authorship is often considered a potential qualifying factor. Insider authors portray a cultural group from the viewpoint of the one who is immersed in the cultural group. Living in cultural groups is advantageous for authors in that it can facilitate their abilities to recognize cultural nuances and authenticity based on their prior knowledge and experiences as members of the group (Yokota, 1993). For example, the insider perspectives of the researchers Zhang and Wang (2021) allow them to quickly detect inaccurate information reported by the outsider authors, such as cultural events, the use of Chinese language, and the representations of characters' physical appearance, customs, and family and community roles. Such misrepresentations are also found by numerous other scholars (Cai, 1994, 2002; Chen & Wang, 2014; Rodríguez & Kim, 2018; Yoo-Lee et al., 2014) in their discovery of persistent inaccuracies and inauthenticity in Asian American children's literature.

A question that may arise then is whether or not nonfiction picturebooks are delivering accurate information regarding their portrayal of Chinese people and cultural details. Unfortunately, the extant literature on nonfiction picturebooks about China rarely covers this issue of authenticity. Accuracy and authenticity of cultural information are barely scrutinized, and research has not yet looked into any correct or incorrect developments in portrayals that may have occurred as the number of published picturebooks about China and Chinese Americans steadily continues to rise.

In what perhaps further obfuscates the matter at hand, the criterion of being an insider is still unclear, as cultural heritage does not guarantee one's membership in any cultural group. Even if an author is a cultural insider, it is possible that the author does not possess sufficient experiential understanding. Perseverance exhibited through extensive reading, imaginative bonding with the topic, and strong commitment to engaging readers deeply is often observed among insider authors with an inherited cultural imperative (Mikkelsen, 1998). Yet outsider authors with strong empathetic feelings about a project can contribute to quality multicultural literature through extensive research and participation in the target cultural groups (Mikkelsen, 1998). A conundrum

becomes evident regarding the qualifications of insiders and outsiders and whether readers should or should not acknowledge the insider/outsider authors' efforts to search for relevant sources to fully understand the target culture and cultural group's values. In this sense, peritextual features can help guide readers to a more confident decision, where the validity of the efforts of insider or outsider authors can be subject to additional scrutiny and validation.

With the knowledge of peritext and its potentially positive role in nonfiction picturebooks, it is relevant to consider to what extent peritextual elements support children in reading multicultural nonfiction picturebooks. To answer this, we have developed specific research questions and gathered and organized the information according to what is known as *backmatter*, 'which is the collection of author and illustrator notes, diagrams, bibliographies, and other elements included in the pages after the main body' (Cappiello & Hadjioannou, 2022, p. 1). Instead of distinguishing backmatter and frontmatter, we use the term peritextual elements, although we adopt Cappiello and Hadjioannou's (2022) backmatter typology to answer the following research questions and sub-questions:

- What types of peritextual elements are observed in multicultural nonfiction picturebooks about Chinese people, including Chinese Americans?
- How are the peritextual features of multicultural nonfiction picturebooks about Chinese people and Chinese Americans related to accuracy, authenticity, and rich detail?
 - Are the authors of multicultural nonfiction picturebooks about Chinese people and Chinese Americans frequently insiders?
 - How do insiders or outsiders convey their efforts for accuracy, authenticity, and rich detail in the backmatter?

Methods

Data Collection

The current study sought to document and describe the backmatter of 19 Chinese nonfiction picturebooks from local libraries, employing a systematic content analysis method widely used in the qualitative research tradition (Miles et al., 2019). This qualitative study is a partial replication

of Cai's (1994) study, as we searched for Chinese picturebooks in the online databases of two local public libraries and one university library, which Cai had used for his research. These libraries are located in a Midwestern metropolitan statistical area in the United States, including the college town and the adjacent urban area, where there was a total population of 169,895 at the time the study was conducted. For search terms, we used Chinese children's literature, Chinese American children's literature, and Taiwanese children's literature. The initial search located 154 picturebooks: 11 books had been available since Cai's study, and 143 books were newly added since then. Among these 154 picturebooks, there were 19 nonfiction picturebooks, which comprised 12.34%. This is an increase of 6.37% from 5.97% in Cai's (1994) data: There were only four nonfiction picturebooks among 67 Chinese picturebooks in the same libraries 30 years ago. Those four nonfiction picturebooks from Cai's data had been removed from these three libraries, and consequently, our queries did not yield relevant search results for the removed items. Therefore, our analysis focused on nineteen Chinese nonfiction picturebooks currently available in those three libraries.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was undertaken to determine what types of peritextual elements are observed in the nineteen Chinese nonfiction picturebooks, and how those types are related to the insider/outsider status of authors and illustrators. Drawing on Cappiello and Hadjioannou's (2022) research, we analysed certain peritextual elements of the picturebooks using an a priori coding system with five codes: 1) exhibiting book creators' passion and curiosity about the topic; 2) revealing diverse sources and resources to make sense of research, writing, and illustrating as mentor processes; 3) providing other relevant information to contextualize the content; 4) modelling professional practices in a relevant discipline of the content, such as unique research process, particular writing convention, and the discussion of prevailing issues in the discipline; 5) inviting readers to take action, such as doing further research or taking particular social action. These elements were not mutually exclusive, which means that multiple codes could be given to a peritextual element. These codes are further explained as follows:

Type 1 code. This was used to identify any peritextual element that exhibited the book creators' passion, expertise and curiosity about the topic. For example, we found this element in *Paper Son: The Inspiring Story of Tyrus Wong, Immigrant and Artist* (2019). The author's and the illustrator's notes explain how they learned about Tyrus Wong and their connection to his work, which shows readers their motivation for creating the book.

Type 2 code. This was used for coding peritextual elements that reveal the mentor process, which shows the path of collecting and synthesizing the diverse sources and resources that the book creators used during their process of research, writing, and illustrating. For example, acknowledgments of the book, *Sky High: The True Story of Maggie Gee* (2009), show that Maggie Gee shared her story with the author, and the illustrator consulted with various people in the illustration reference process. The publisher also included acknowledgments on behalf of the author and illustrator, proving that the aviation expert reviewed the information presented in the book.

Type 3 code. This was given to peritextual elements that provided expanded relevant information that could help readers contextualize the content. *I am American: The Wong Kim Ark Story* (2021) and *Mountain Chef: How One Man Lost His Groceries, Changed His Plans, and Helped Cook up the National Park Service* (2016) are biographies about Wong Kim Ark and Chef Sing, respectively. Both picturebooks use peritext to provide additional information about the Chinese individual introduced in the story to help expand readers' background knowledge related to the book's contents.

Type 4 code. We used this to recognize peritextual elements that supported disciplinary literacy by modelling professional practices in a discipline relevant to the content. Disciplinary literacy is defined as different reading, writing, and communication styles in specific content areas. This code was assigned when the peritext discussed a unique research process, particular writing convention, and the discussion of prevailing issues in the discipline. We found Type 4 elements in *The Fearless Flights of Hazel Ying Lee* (2021). This picturebook provides readers with further readings and resources to explore and learn more about Hazel Ying Lee, such as books, documentaries, websites, and information about different museums.

Type 5 code. This was ascribed to peritextual elements that explicitly invited readers to take action, such as conducting further research and taking appropriate steps to meet the needs of the community. We coded *Look! What Do You See? An Art Puzzle Book of American & Chinese Songs* (2017) under Type 5 because the book invites readers to crack optical puzzles invented by the author. As children have not encountered the puzzles before, this picturebook challenges them to step outside of their comfort zone to take action and try something new.

The online spreadsheet included basic descriptive information on each book, such as book title, author and illustrator, and publication year as well as the main coding type within the peritext typology. Furthermore, as we sought to describe the relations between the insider/outsider status of the book creators and the use of peritextual elements, the spreadsheet included codes to identify insider/outsider status reflecting the author/illustrator's racial and ethnic backgrounds. We searched for information about authors and illustrators from the author's note, the author's bio included in the book or their websites, and any information about them that we found online. We coded only the author and illustrator of Chinese heritage as insiders and everyone else as outsiders. Even though East Asian authors and illustrators who are not of Chinese descent, such as Japanese American or Korean American authors, may be more familiar with the Chinese culture than the authors and illustrators of non-Asian heritage, we coded them as outsiders. China, Japan, and Korea are grouped together in many events in history and are closely located geographically. However, these countries possess culturally distinct practices from the past to the present, even if they bear similar traits on the surface level. We understand that ethnicity is not an absolute herald of possessing deep cultural knowledge, and the cut offs used in the present work may indeed not be a 1:1 reflection of an individual author's true knowledge of Chinese cultural groups. Nevertheless, we applied such a cap to uniformly standardize our analysis as best as we could, given the information that was readily available to us, and we believe that this cut off, although not perfect, can serve to reveal meaningful prevalent trends upon careful analysis.

Findings

Our research questions focused on the peritextual features of Chinese/Chinese American nonfiction picturebooks. Our analysis of 19 Chinese nonfiction picturebooks indicates the presence of

peritextual information that supports readers' understanding of the authenticity of the resources but that only a few provide information for further actions to search for relevant information. Following Cappiello and Hadjioannou's (2022) typology, 9 books (50%) include peritextual features related to the authenticity and expertise of the book creators in the target culture (Type 1). Resources about the author's or illustrator's passion and curiosity about the target culture are described in dust jacket and authors' notes so that readers can learn about the book creator's intentions or cultural background. Type 2 peritextual features about research processes are presented in 5 books (27.78%). The acknowledgments section is a good place to explain an author's and illustrator's research process to provide authentic information. Expanded information under Type 3 is provided in 14 books (77.78%). More details of the story, timelines, and sub-topics are presented to support readers' comprehension of the context of the time period. This type of information is crucial to help readers think critically about the information provided. Opportunities for disciplinary literacy (Type 4) are provided in 10 books (55.56%). Authors' notes, further reading, and selected reference lists inform readers about how writers and illustrators expand their knowledge as researchers. Information calling for readers' actions (Type 5) is provided in one book (5.56%).

Type 1	Type 2	Type 3	Type 4	Type 5
9 books (50%)	5 books (27.78%)	14 books (77.78%)	10 books (55.56%)	1 book (5.56%)

Table 1. Number of books found for each type within the typology

As listed in Table 2, 19 authors and 14 illustrators (five authors contribute to illustrations; their contributions are not duplicated) are identified in the 19 Chinese nonfiction picturebooks. Eight authors (42.1%) are classified as insiders, such as self-identified Chinese, Chinese American, or Chinese Canadian. The 11 authors (57.89%) classified as outsiders consist of various racial backgrounds, including Japanese American, White American, American-born French, and Korean American. Nine illustrators (47.37%) are classified as insiders, including Chinese and Taiwanese (3 illustrators overlapped with their role as authors). Ten outsider illustrators (52.63%) consist of Korean Americans and White Americans (2 illustrators overlap with their role as authors).

	Insider	Outsider
Author	Chen Jiang Hong Vickie Lee Julie Leung Grace Lin Rich Lo Teresa Robeson Bing Xu Ed Young	Amy Alznauer Martha Brockenbrough Joanna Cole Demi Leslie C. Kaplan Kathleen Krull Ken Mochizuki Marissa Moss Annette Bay Pimentel Alicia Potter Paula Yoo
Illustrator	Joey Chou Chen Jiang Hong Rebecca Huang Julia Kuo ShanZou Zhou and DaHuang Zhou Rich Lo Lin Wang Ed Young	Carl Angel Demi Robert Byrd Bruce Degen Leslie C. Kaplan Julie Kwon Dom Lee Chris Sasaki Becca Stadtlander Melissa Sweet

Table 2. Insider and outsider authors and illustrators

In this study, we also sought to examine the relationship between insider/outsider status and peritextual information present in Chinese nonfiction picturebooks. Our analysis using five codes corresponding to five types of peritextual elements reveals that there is no clear relationship between the insider and outsider status and their use of different types within the typology. We found that all the authors and illustrators used peritextual elements and enriched readers' reading experiences of Chinese nonfiction picturebooks.

Type 1: passion and curiosity

We expected that outsider book creators are likely to include more information related to passion and curiosity (Type 1) to support their reasonable grounds for writing a book about Chinese cultural

groups and their language. We also expected that outsider authors are likely to report their research process as knowledge collection, interpretation, and selection of resources to support the authenticity in the subject of their books. Opposed to our expectations, however, we found that both insider and outsider authors and illustrators shared their passion and curiosity about Chinese cultural matters and language (Type 1) as a motivation to write their books as shown in Table 3. For instance, insider authors, such as Rich Lo, the author of *Chinese New Year Colors* (2019) and Julie Leung, the author of *Paper Son* (2019) and *The Fearless Flights of Hazel Ying Lee* (2021), often report their Chinese heritage fuels their passion and curiosity to learn about and share cultural aspects with readers. Similarly, an outsider author's passion to learn about Chinese cultural phenomena, as seen in Demi's *Su Dongpo: Chinese Genius* (2006), also indicates the author's motivation to write a book about China.

Type 2: mentor processes

The number of books with resource components in the peritext (Type 2) is slightly higher in outsider books than insider books. For example, Ed Young, the author and illustrator of *The House Baba Built: An Artist's Childhood in China* (2011) classified as an insider, describes his experiences of visiting his childhood house in Shanghai, and his appreciation of his family's stories as a process of searching for information, resources, and shaping the book as a refined story. Young's story would not have been possible if he had not grown up surrounded by his family and friends in Shanghai. Since this nonfiction picturebook is Young's memoir, which is based on his personal experiences as Chinese born and raised in Shanghai, China, the cultural authenticity of the story is not questionable. Therefore, Young did not need to include a peritext that indicates the authenticity of his story. However, in this book, readers can find ample sources that support Young's memory, including photos of people introduced in the story, a diagram of the house, a timeline of Baba's life, and an author's note. Young's choice of art medium, a collage, works well in this book, allowing Young to include numerous photos of people and artifacts. Old photos of Young's family and friends have an effect on readers as if they are looking at Young's family album, which contributes to the authenticity of the story.

Type 3: expanded information

Our analysis also indicates outsider authors' efforts to contextualize the content (Type 3) and model professional practices (Type 4). For example, In *Flying Paintings: The Zhou Brothers: A Story of Revolution and Art* (2020), the author Amy Alznauer includes author's notes and expanded context with references to old China in the 1950s when the government did not approve of private business and artworks. The Zhou brothers' hope and their offers of support to young artists by running multiple art centres across the USA provide additional information about these artists. In *Shining Star: The Anna May Wong Story* (2009), the author Paula Yoo also provides the context of the 1930s to support Anna May's struggle to pursue an acting career in Hollywood, because there were very few roles for Asian Americans, and many were demeaning and stereotypical at the time. Outsider authors' efforts to provide contexts support readers' understanding of the time and the subjects' challenges to achieve their dreams.

Type 4: disciplinary literacy

When it comes to disciplinary literacy (Type 4) in nonfiction peritextual elements, outside authors openly acknowledge the limitations of their research. The author of *Be Water, My Friend: The Early Years of Bruce Lee* (2006), Ken Mochizuki, provides a list of sources to support her research on Bruce Lee's life. By modelling professional practices, the author's note highlights a limitation with this story as information about Lee's earliest years is limited. In *Kubla Khan: The Emperor of Everything* (2010), the author, Kathleen Krull, acknowledges the limitation of reliable resources and their efforts to make sense of the known facts to write the story of Kubla Khan. The illustrator, Robert Byrd, also noted the limited resources. As the Mongolians are nomadic, their preserved authentic cultural records and drawings are few. Available resources from Chinese, Indian, and Persian artists are likely to have biases and distorted views of Kubla in Western attire. By openly acknowledging the restriction of resources, the illustrator provides a space for readers to take into consideration when interpreting the story and artistic works. In both *Be Water, My Friend* (2006) and *Kubla Khan* (2010), resources provide supporting documents to enhance readers' knowledge and the author's research to write this story. Teresa Robenson's *Queen of Physics: How Wu Chien Shiung Helped Unlock the Secrets of the Atom* (2019) offers rich peritextual elements, such as a

glossary, further reading lists, and selected bibliography, that helps readers to learn more about Wu Chien Shiung's achievement. This peritextual information supports readers in learning the process of multifaceted study and professional practices.

Type 5: action

Analysis of the 19 books show a general lack of sources for readers to take action (Type 5). As introduced in the method section, *Look! What do you see?: An Art Puzzle Book of American & Chinese Songs* (2017) was coded under Type 5. This book presents Square Word Calligraphy, which the author of this book, Xu Bing, created in 1994. This picturebook looks as if it is written in Chinese at a glance. However, the letters are not real Chinese characters as they are the author's inventions. Each letter combines two or more characters, and each character is associated with the English alphabet. In order to read this book, readers first need to find which Chinese character is associated with which English letter in the alphabet and then combine them to figure out what was written. Readers can find some clues about what is written, but they need to actively work to solve the puzzles that the author has presented. According to Cappiello and Hadjioannou (2022), Type 5 peritextual information encourages readers to take action that can contribute to changes or change the world. In nonfiction works, readers are often encouraged to take action, or tackle a difficult problem, or research a complicated topic to further investigate the available resources and historical information of their own volition. However, *Look! What do you see?* (2017) is far from inviting readers to take action for social change. Therefore, it is noteworthy that our finding shows that taking action for social change is invisible in Chinese and Chinese American nonfiction picturebooks if we only count peritext encouraging readers to take action for social change.

	Type 1: passion and curiosity	Type 2: mentor processes	Type 3: expanded information	Type 4: disciplinary literacy	Type 5: action	Total
Insider's book	6	2	4	3	1	16
Outsider's book	3	3	9	7	0	22

Table 3. Analysis of 5 types within the typology

Discussion

With our research on Chinese nonfiction picturebooks, we study the significant roles of peritextual features (Pantaleo, 2018) and authenticity of multicultural literature (Yokota, 1993). We found that more insider authors explained their passion and the reason why they decided to write a book about Chinese and Chinese American cultural phenomena by relating to their Chinese heritage culture. Their curiosity to learn more about their heritage culture inherently allows for more authentic and rich descriptions based on their lived experiences in the target culture. When it comes to multicultural literature, especially nonfiction literature, it is critical to evaluate authenticity and accuracy of the content. The Chinese nonfiction picturebooks analysed in this study had a balance of authorships when it comes to the insider/outsider approach, unlike Durand et al.'s (2021) and Koss et al.'s (2017) research which concerns the lack of insider authorship. As our study focuses on nonfiction picturebooks about Chinese people and Chinese Americans, peritextual features are expected to reflect the author's inherent qualifications to be able to provide authentic information on different cultural groups. In this context, we discuss how peritextual features can be used to evaluate cultural authenticity to overcome the limitations of a single story and outsider authorship.

Our study revealed that White authors and illustrators did not dominate in creating nonfiction picturebooks about Chinese people and Chinese Americans. However, we found that more than half the books surveyed in this study were written and/or illustrated by outsider authors and illustrators. Our search on one specific ethnic group may have enabled us to find more books created by insider authors and illustrators than in Koss et al.'s (2017) study, which shows White authors and illustrators' dominance in Caldecott honoured and awarded children's literature. In the following sections, we will discuss insider and outsider authors' and illustrators' use of peritextual elements in nonfiction about Chinese people and Chinese Americans.

Insiders with rich peritextual information

Insider authors and illustrators can actively adopt peritextual features to provide proof of their passion for the target culture and investment of their energy and time to search for relevant resources to understand the cultural values and history. The insiders report their process of organizing resources and providing information to avoid their insider biases, such as a single-story

issue (Adichie, 2009). In other words, even though the author/illustrator is an insider who is fully immersed in the culture, more effort can still be made to convey one's cultural heritage as authentically as possible. Therefore, they must explore relevant resources to expand their views on their own culture if they intend to write nonfiction literature for children. Julie Leung, the author of *The Fearless Flights of Hazel Ying Lee* (2021), describes her life as the daughter of a Chinese immigrant family in the USA. According to the author's note, she learned about Hazel Ying Lee while visiting the Museum of Chinese in America in New York City. She recalled that she had not learned about Chinese historical figures through her childhood education. Therefore, it must have been an appealing incentive for her to learn more about Hazel Ying Lee and write a book about her life. Her research on Hazel Ying Lee is presented at the end of the book as a further reading list and resources, demonstrating the disciplinary literacy aspects of her work.

In *Chinese New Year Colors* (2019), Rich Lo introduces colours found in Chinese cultural objects, such as a paper fan, a lantern, and a teapot, with Chinese and English words and illustrations. In this bilingual picturebook, Lo made effective use of double-page spreads. In each spread, words are introduced on the verso, and illustrations are included on the recto. The back flap of the dust cover indicates that Lo's family immigrated to the USA when she was seven. Even though this picturebook only includes simple words and illustrations, the peritextual features, such as descriptions of each cultural object in the end pages and dedication, expand readers' knowledge beyond the vocabulary and into a better understanding of Chinese cultural objects.

Insiders with less peritextual information

Insiders with less peritextual elements might assume that they do not need to search for or report their resources because they grew up in the target country. As they are immersed in the culture, they may see their cultural and social experiences as automatically authentic and accurate resources. This view is a traditional approach to insider authorship as they naturally recognize cultural nuances and authenticity based on prior knowledge and experiences as members of the group (Yokota, 1993). Indeed, insider scholars have explored inaccurate and inauthentic portrayals of multicultural literature (Cai, 1994, 2002; Chen & Wang, 2014; Rodríguez & Kim, 2018; Yoo-Lee et al., 2014), and their insider perspectives contribute to their analysis.

However, our study implies that even though authors are insiders, they cannot represent Chinese cultural complexity as a whole. Also, their lack of peritextual elements limits readers' understanding of the target culture and makes it challenging to determine the authenticity and accuracy of information in nonfiction picturebooks. For example, *12 Lucky Animals: A Bilingual Baby Book's* (2018) author, Vickie Lee (Chinese American), and the illustrator, Joey Chou (Taiwanese), are classified as insiders in the current study. On the surface level, the picturebook is similar to Rich Lo's *Chinese New Year Colors* (2019) in several aspects: insider authorship, objects with both Chinese and English words, and a double-page spread format. However, Lee's picturebook does not provide readers with rich peritextual information that introduces Chinese cultural context. The twelve animals introduced in this board book are from the Chinese Zodiac, constituting part of the Chinese calendar system. The 12 animals are familiar to readers who are already knowledgeable about Asian cultures, considering ancient China's influence on adjacent countries, such as Japan and Korea. However, without any provided background information on the Chinese Zodiac, audiences unfamiliar with Asian culture may miss the context regarding the portrayal of the 12 animals.

Considering multicultural literature's function to play as mirrors, windows, and sliding doors (Bishop, 1990; Botelho, 2021), it is imperative to provide contexts and information so that readers can learn about other cultural circumstances and experiences. Thus, even insiders should be aware of the limitations of their cultural and social knowledge and experiences. In particular, authors and illustrators writing nonfiction picturebooks for children should be aware of how to express their efforts of collecting resources and making connections to the target culture, and acknowledge their limited views as insiders.

Outsiders with rich peritextual information

Bainbridge et al. (1999) allude to insider and outsider views in multicultural literature by expressing concern about outsider authorship, such as the tourist view of characters and events when writing cross-cultural literature. As outsider book creators are not the members of the target group, their interpretation of cultural values and nuances have limitations. To back up their authority to write about the different cultural groups, outsiders can adopt peritextual functions in

nonfiction picturebooks. For example, Demi, the author of the book, *Su Dongpo: Chinese Genius*, delineates what motivates her to write about Su Dongpo, a historically overlooked Chinese calligrapher, politician, and writer during the Song Dynasty. She also reports a possibility of transliterations of Chinese words, names, and geographical locations due to variations by using the Pinyin system of Romanization. The peritextual information she provides encourages audiences to be aware of linguistic differences and the author's careful approach to resources. Her efforts in providing peritextual features as an outsider of the cultural group support her authorship as well as the credibility of accurate and authentic descriptions of the historical figure.

Koss et al. (2017) found that Latinx characters in Caldecott books were often created by non-Latinx authors and illustrators. Durand et al. (2021) also found more outsiders' books in the US Board on Books for Young People (USBBY) Outstanding International Books List. Although our study did not show the outsider's dominance, we found that outsiders created a slightly higher number of books than insiders. Specifically, eleven books were written by outsiders, and eight books were written by insiders. Ten books were illustrated by outsiders, and nine books were illustrated by insiders. When evaluating nonfiction picturebooks about Chinese people and Chinese Americans, asking who wrote/illustrated the book may be one of the first questions readers need to ask. However, finding information about the author's and illustrator's insider/outsider status should not be the sole criteria for selecting a book. As shown in this study, non-Chinese authors and illustrators can break through the disadvantages of being outsiders by using peritextual elements effectively. Therefore, rather than immediately judging authors and illustrators based on their insider or outsider membership, examining their use of peritextual elements may reveal much about their passion, knowledge, and experience of the people, history, and culture they wish to show to the reader. Rich peritextual elements may enhance readers' reading experience of nonfiction picturebooks and can help them to learn more than just factual information about Chinese people and Chinese Americans.

Outsiders with less peritextual information

For Chinese nonfiction picturebooks written and illustrated by outsiders with less peritextual information, it is challenging to evaluate the quality of the literature. For multicultural nonfiction literature in particular, audiences should pay extra attention to the quality of resources and author

biases. An example can be seen by comparing the following two books. *Ms. Frizzle's Adventures: Imperial China* (2005; *Imperial China* henceforth) is written and illustrated by a non-Chinese author and illustrator. Joanna Cole and Bruce Degen are an author-illustrator team who co-created the *Magic School Bus* series, and readers of those series may agree that this picturebook reads like an extension of *Magic School Bus* books. In this picturebook, Ms. Frizzle and her students travel to China across time and space. The characters get a taste of life in ancient China by participating in activities such as planting rice by hand, enjoying tea on a boat, and making silk. This picturebook introduces information about ancient China, assuming that readers would not have had exposure to such knowledge beforehand. The fantasy elements and dialogues among characters make reading large amounts of information more fun and engaging for readers. However, some readers may not agree that this book is nonfiction due to the fantasy elements. Kaplan's *Chinese New Year* (2004), on the other hand, introduces the Chinese New Year to children with concise explanations of related topics and photos without fantasy elements.

Both *Imperial China* (2005) and *Chinese New Year* (2004) instantly put readers in tourist positions, and teach them about either ancient China or the Chinese New Year with factual information. *Imperial China* (2005) informs readers that 'many Chinese inventions were left out of this book' due to the limited space available. However, no additional resources about other Chinese inventions are provided. In contrast, in *Chinese New Year* (2004), more peritextual features such as a table of contents, glossary, and index are included. This peritext is designed to encourage the reader to learn more about China of their own volition, to learn not just about the Chinese New Year but rather to actively pursue other related nonfiction works that go beyond the contents covered in the book.

Cultural authenticity may be questionable when outsider authors and illustrators create characters who do not share the same ethnic background (Koss et al., 2017). Our findings support their concern as we found that outsider books with less peritextual information may take a tourist perspective, treating readers as outsiders. Such a book may lead readers to learn about Chinese people and Chinese Americans on a surface level with factual information only. This kind of book may perhaps be used as an introductory source, but it cannot be the only book children read to learn about China and Chinese Americans.

Limitations of Using Peritextual Features to Evaluate Chinese Nonfiction Picturebooks

The presence of peritextual resources in nonfiction literature can depend on the editors, the author's preference, or marketing reasons. However, peritextual features in Chinese nonfiction picturebooks in our study provide insights to evaluate the quality of a book's content. This approach of using peritext can support audiences' decision-making on cultural authenticity and accuracy beyond the insider/outsider aspects. The author's and illustrator's motivation or personal relation to Chinese cultural phenomena cannot guarantee their authentic descriptions. Thus, we are in agreement with the argument of the previous scholars who approached peritextual features to develop students' critical literacy when it comes to evaluating authenticity and accuracy in multicultural literature (Gill, 2009; Gross et al., 2016; Martinez et al., 2016; Wilson, 2006). Our study expands their argument to culturally specific nonfiction picturebooks: Chinese nonfiction picturebooks.

Our study has limitations when it comes to classifying insider authors and illustrators based on their self-identified racial backgrounds or heritage, in that ethnicity may not be a sufficient feature in evaluating the author's level of engagement with mainland China. Those with Chinese heritage as second or third generations or identified as Taiwanese or Taiwanese Chinese may have insufficient experience and knowledge of political and social contexts to understand Chinese values and viewpoints. As Chinese lineages cannot guarantee the quality of authorship, our analysis of insider/outsider authorship may show gaps in interpreting their research and knowledge of the Chinese nonfiction content. However, that non-Chinese authors can indeed provide works whose authenticity is enhanced with the use of peritextual elements is evidence against the argument that an author must be an insider to be qualified and that multiple factors, not just ethnicity, should be carefully weighed to evaluate the quality of nonfiction literature for children.

Implications and Conclusion

Examining and studying peritextual elements in Chinese nonfiction picturebooks has several notable implications for teachers and teacher educators. First, teachers should take full advantage of peritextual features (Serafini, 2012) and use them as a vehicle to evaluate the authenticity of picturebooks for instructional purposes and equip their classroom libraries. Our findings showed that regardless of the authors' and illustrators' insider/outsider status, rich peritextual features

support the authenticity of the information the book creators present. Second, teachers should explicitly teach children about peritextual features, such as dedication, an author's note, further reading resources, dust jackets, and endpapers. As suggested in Cappiello and Hadjioannou's study (2022), a question like, 'Where do nonfiction topics come from?' (p. 310) may invite students to think about the author's motivation to write the book and stimulate their interest in the topic. Third, teachers can guide children to utilize the information they found in a peritext to understand the book's main content (Martinez et al., 2016). Children need to learn how to find information from peritextual elements, but they should also be able to distinguish between more important information and less important information to understand the story (Bluestein, 2000). Peritextual elements, including a reading list, a timeline, photos, and additional resources, can be used for students to explore the topic further. Readers' awareness of peritextual elements is fundamental to developing their skills to analyse, critique, and interpret the content of a nonfiction book.

Our study aims to expand an understanding of the value of peritextual elements by evaluating Chinese nonfiction picturebooks using Cappiello and Hadjioannou's (2022) typology of peritext. While Chinese Americans are the largest Asian origin group in the USA (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021), their stories and cultural information in nonfiction are often neglected. With the assistance of peritextual elements, finding authentic and accurate information on heritage nonfiction picturebooks can help educators better refine a culturally responsive curriculum.

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