

# Novels - Social Considerations Evaluation Guidelines

## BACKGROUND

The BC Ministry of Education has developed criteria to evaluate learning resources. These are grouped under five main areas: Curriculum Fit, Content, Instructional Design, Technical Design, and Social Considerations. The criteria are intended to encourage evaluators to think critically about the resource and evaluate some of its more detailed aspects. Evaluators rate these specific criteria using provincial evaluation forms, and then make a recommendation to approve or not approve the resource for provincial “Recommended” status.

During 2006, the Ministry worked with the BC Educational Resource Acquisition Consortium (ERAC) to review and update the criteria for learning resource evaluation. Also in Summer 2006, ERAC adapted these criteria to apply them to the evaluation of *novels used in the classroom as a learning resource*.

## EVALUATION PERSPECTIVE

The goal of the ERAC novel evaluation process is to determine:

- the suitability of the material as a classroom resource;
- whether additional explanation, instruction, or support material would be required; or
- that the material is not suitable for a particular curriculum purpose or intended audience.

Evaluators read and analyze a novel, and provide written comments regarding the suitability of the novel for ‘Recommended’ status – taking into account a number of general and specific considerations that comprise the evaluation criteria.

## GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS for LEARNING RESOURCE EVALUATION, including NOVELS

The evaluation process takes into account both what has been included in the content and presentation of the material in a resource, and what may have been omitted. General considerations applicable to all areas of learning resource evaluation, including Social Considerations, which are used to determine the suitability of a resource for recommendation, include:

- curriculum focus and context in which the resource is intended to be used;
- audience, including age and level of maturity of the students for whom the resource is intended;
- relevance of and extent to which the historical, social, cultural, political, and/or geographical context is apparent to intended audience;
- tone, with regards to subject matter or intended audience;
- presentation of alternative points of view, where there is clear purpose for inclusion; and
- extent and frequency of occurrence of elements that detract from the suitability of the resource for its intended purpose and audience.

## **SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS — SOCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Diversity is one of the most prominent features of British Columbia’s society and our schools. In its design, the provincially prescribed curriculum supports an education system in which all students are fully participating members of a community of learners and can develop their individual potential.

Learning resource evaluation takes into account several specific considerations to ensure that British Columbia students see themselves and their life experiences reflected and validated in the learning materials they use in their classrooms. The wide range of audiences that comprise the classroom situation in which the resources are to be used is considered e.g., *Programme francophone* and French Immersion students; students whose first language is not English; and students with special needs, such as physical disabilities, intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities, hearing impairments, visual impairments, and students with special gifts and talents.

### Social Considerations: General Considerations

It is not the intention of the review process to eliminate opportunities for critical thinking and discussion that may arise from classroom use of a novel. An examination of a resource for social considerations, however, helps to identify potentially controversial or offensive elements that may exist in the content or presentation, and highlight where resources might support pro-social attitudes and promote diversity and human rights.

Evaluating learning resources, including novels, from the perspective of Social Considerations can be one of the most challenging aspects of the evaluation process. Evaluators must take into account many considerations within a context of community and societal values and standards, in order to determine the suitability of the learning resource for provincially “Recommended” status.

Analyzing a resource from the perspectives of inclusion and accessibility for all students, evaluators consider the extent to which the resource:

- promotes respect for and an understanding of the diversity of British Columbian/Canadian society;
- promotes awareness, understanding, and respect for differences and similarities within and among groups;
- reflects and validates students’ life experiences;
- portrays diverse role models and different points of view;
- reflects accurate representations and avoids stereotype;
- makes clear distinctions between fact and opinion;
- promotes positive social attitudes and respect for diversity and human rights; and
- provides opportunity for students to develop critical thinking skills.

The goal is to select resources that support students’ social development as well as their intellectual development – encouraging understanding and promoting positive social attitudes and respect for diversity and human rights.

### Social Considerations: Specific Considerations

The following information is provided to help evaluators identify specific attributes within the resource that may contribute or detract from its suitability.

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Rationale/What to look for</b>
<b>SC-1 Age</b>	<p>This criterion is intended to examine how a resource enhances understanding about different age groups and cross-generational relations.</p> <p><b>What to look for:</b> Representation of individuals and groups at various stages along the continuum of life; portrayals are realistic and avoid stereotype.</p>
<b>SC-2 Gender Roles</b>	<p>This criterion is intended to examine how a resource reflects female and male roles and relationships.</p> <p><b>What to look for:</b> Representation of females and males in diverse roles and relationships; portrayals reflect diversity and avoid stereotype.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• equitable and realistic female and male portrayals</li><li>• free from sexist, abusive, and derogatory references to gender</li></ul>
<b>SC-3 Aboriginal Peoples</b>	<p>This criterion is intended to examine how a resource reflects the diversity of culture, experiences, perspectives and contributions of Aboriginal Peoples within British Columbia/Canadian society.</p> <p><b>What to look for:</b> Representation of Aboriginal peoples; portrayals, both in historical and contemporary contexts, are accurate, non-denigrating; recognition of the diversity of cultures present among Aboriginal peoples.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• free from generalization and stereotype</li><li>• tokenism; ‘generic’ and/or ‘romanticized’ portrayal</li></ul>
<b>SC-4 Multiculturalism</b>	<p>This criterion is intended to examine how a resource reflects the experiences, perspectives and contributions of diverse individuals and groups that make up British Columbia/Canadian society.</p> <p><b>What to look for:</b> Representations reflect cultural diversity; portrayals are respectful and culturally accurate e.g., language, dialect, custom, dress, diet, roles, etc.; similarities and differences within and among cultures and ethno-specific groups are recognized.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• free from generalization and stereotype</li><li>• free from ‘exotic’ and/or token portrayal</li></ul>

<p><b>SC-5 Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation</b></p>	<p>This criterion is intended to examine how a resource reflects the experiences, perspectives and contributions of both heterosexual and non-heterosexual individuals and groups.</p> <p><b>What to look for:</b> Representation of individuals and groups across the full range of gender identity and sexual orientation; contributions are emphasized; diversity of roles and relationships is reflected; portrayals are non-denigrating and avoid stereotype.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• inclusion and respectful portrayal</li> <li>• free from abusive and derogatory references</li> </ul>
<p><b>SC-6 Ability – Disability</b></p>	<p>This criterion is intended to examine how a resource reflects ability and disability.</p> <p><b>What to look for:</b> Representation of experiences and perspectives of individuals and groups along the continuum of ability-disability; portrayal is realistic and accurate; emphasis is on ability and contribution.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• representation of both ability and disability</li> </ul>
<p><b>SC-7 Belief System</b></p>	<p>This criterion is intended to examine how a resource presents information related to philosophy, religion and/or political ideology.</p> <p><b>What to look for:</b> Topics of philosophy, religion and/or political ideology, when included, are presented with a clear purpose and provide opportunity for critical thinking; make a clear distinction between fact and opinion and do not advocate one belief system over another.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• representation of personal traits, circumstances, attitudes, actions of adherents of various belief systems are respectful</li> <li>• free from generalization, exaggeration, prejudice</li> </ul>
<p><b>SC-8 Socio-Economic</b></p>	<p>This criterion is intended to examine how a resource reflects a continuum of the realities of day-to-day life in Canadian society.</p> <p><b>What to look for:</b> Representation reflects the full range of realities of day-to-day life in British Columbia/Canadian society; respects the socio-economic realities of British Columbia students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reflects the complexity of the socio-economic make-up of British Columbian/Canadian society</li> <li>• representations are accurate and realistic</li> </ul>

<p><b>SC-9 Violence</b></p>	<p>This criterion is intended to examine references to violence, tension, and/or graphic imagery that may be included in a resource.</p> <p><b>What to look for:</b> Violence, tension, and graphic imagery, where included, has a clear purpose and supports instruction; level and degree of explicitness takes into account the age and maturity of intended audience; provides opportunities for modelling effective problem-solving and conflict resolution strategies; provides opportunities for students to develop compassion and empathy.</p>
<p><b>SC-10 Ethical and Legal</b></p>	<p>This criterion is intended to examine how a resource presents issues that may be subject to legal or ethical debate.</p> <p><b>What to look for:</b> Issues that may be subject to legal or ethical debate, when included, are presented with a clear purpose and provide opportunity for critical thinking; make a clear distinction between fact and opinion; provide opportunity for expanded understanding of alternative points of view; provide accurate and current data.</p>
<p><b>SC-11 Humour</b></p>	<p>This criterion is intended to examine how humour is used in a resource to engage student interest in a particular topic.</p> <p><b>What to look for:</b> Humour, if included, is used to engage student interest in the subject; is used in a positive, non-denigrating manner; is age appropriate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• contributes to the overall effectiveness of the material presented</li> </ul>
<p><b>SC-12 Safety</b></p>	<p>This criterion is intended to examine whether a resource complies with legal/community/societal standards of safe practice and common sense.</p> <p><b>What to look for:</b> Reflects legal and community/societal standards of safe practice and common sense; provides opportunities for students to understand the importance of safe practices; provides opportunities for students to develop understanding of personal responsibility as it relates to safety of self and others; models safe practice and common sense; includes directions/instructions for safe equipment use and materials handling.</p>
<p><b>SC-13 Language</b></p>	<p>This criterion is intended to examine how language used contributes to or detracts from audience engagement and/or instructional effectiveness.</p> <p><b>What to look for:</b> Language used contributes to audience engagement and/or instructional effectiveness; is age appropriate; does not overuse specific language for effect or language that has limited meaning, e.g. extensive use of slang and vernacular; is not disrespectful, discourteous, or defamatory.</p>