

# Diversity Considerations in YA: Doing a Diversity Audit

It would be good to acknowledge upfront that an able bodied, white cishet neutral is assumed in society and in publishing, and, for that reason, "diversity" is the imperfect umbrella term used to bring perspectives other than that assumed neutral into focus. Our goal is to make our collections as inclusive as possible. Diversity is the common term, but inclusive collections are our goal.\*

**Diversity is being invited to the party. Inclusion is being asked to dance. – Verna Myers, ILA 2017**

## Important Terms

**Diversity:** Having a wide variety of representations, a variety of experiences and points of view; a book written that includes a diverse characters or points of view by any author. For example: The Chains series by Laurie Halse Anderson

**Own Voices:** An author from a marginalized or under-represented group writing about their own experiences. For example, Matt de la Pena, Brandy Colbert (Source: various online sources/discussions)

## Background Information

[Statistics | Diversity in YA](#)

[The Diversity Baseline Survey | Lee & Low Books](#)

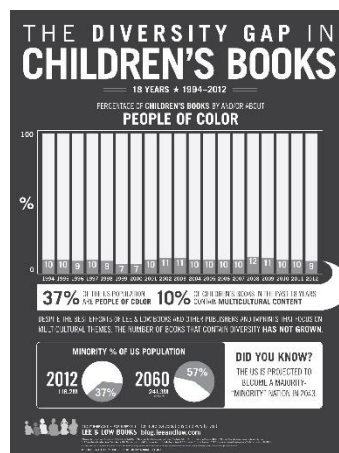
[Infographic Series: The Diversity Gap | Lee & Low Books](#)

[SLJ Resources for Diversity in Kid and YA Lit | School Library Journal](#)

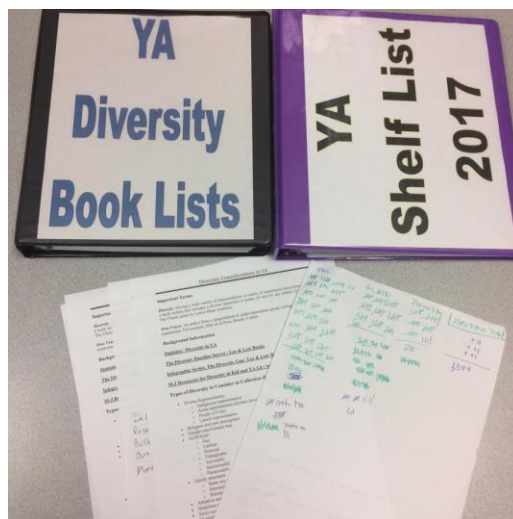
[We Need Diverse Books](#)

[Children's Book Council \(CBC\) Diversity ;CBC Diversity Initiative | Children's Book Council](#)

[Cooperative Children's Book Center:](#) Publishing Stats on Children's Books and Diversity



## What is a Diversity Audit?



Audit: an official inspection of an individual's or organization's accounts, a count or a tally.

A diversity audit is basically doing an inventory of a collection to determine the amount of diversity within the collection. It's a way of analyzing collection data to make sure that we include a wide variety of points of view, experiences and representations within a collection. Our goal is to provide a well-balanced collection that can be both a mirror (reflect a reader's experience) and a window (so readers can experience different experiences and points of view). See: [Windows and Mirrors: Why We Need Diverse Books](#)

## Diversity Targets

Before doing an audit, it's helpful to determine target goals. This was harder than I anticipated, so I used some of the above information (Background Information) to help me set realistic target goals. I also used U.S. and World Census data to help me set my goals.

Sources: [U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts selected: UNITED STATES](#) ; [LGBT America: By the Numbers | Washington Week - PBS](#)

According to the U.S Census Info for 2016, the U.S. population can be broken down into the following percentages:

White Americans	76.9%
Black/African Americans	13.3%
Native Americans/Alaska Natives	1.3%
Asian Americans	5.7%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	0.2%
Hispanic/Latinos	17.8%
Americans with Disabilities (under 65)	8.6%
Americans Identifying as LGBTQ	4.1% (0.3% identify as transgender)

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Things to keep in mind: These are population estimates based on how various respondents self-report in limited categories given to them; there are estimations involved; personal identity and labels aren't as easy as simple statistics and data lead one to believe. In addition, not all people within a group share the same experiences or stories so we need to have a wide variety of stories (there is a diversity within diversity; for example: not all coming out stories are the same). And finally, diversity is intersectional, people identify in more than one way – for example a woman of color may also identify as LGBTQ – which makes diversity more complex than a simple audit would lead one to believe.

## Types of Diversity to Consider in Collection Development

- Diverse Representation:
  - Indigenous/Native American representation
  - Asian representation (broken down by geographic location)
  - People of Color (black/African American)
  - LatinX representation (broken down by geographic location)
- Refugees and new immigrants
- Gender roles/Gender bias/Nonbinary
- GLBTQAI+
  - Gay
  - Lesbian
  - Bisexual
  - Transgender
  - Asexuality
  - Intersex
  - Pansexuality
- Family structures
  - Same sex parents
  - Interracial families
  - Blended/Step families
- Adoption and foster care
- Homeless or without stable accommodation
- Socio economic diversity/Poverty
- Disability
  - Disfigurement
  - Impaired hearing
  - Impaired sight or sight loss
  - Limb loss
  - Use of aids
- Neurological challenges
  - Autism
  - ADHD
- Mental health/Illness (with multiple categories including bipolar, depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, etc.)
- Children with allergies and food intolerances

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- Children with complex health concerns such as cancer, terminal illness, invisible illness, chronic illness, and ongoing treatment.
- Culture and Religion
  - Atheist
  - Christian
  - Hindu
  - Jewish
  - Muslim
  - Wiccan
  - Buddhism
- Body Diversity/Acceptance
- Incarceration (of both parents and teens)
- Intersectionality

**Source:** [A Diversity Audit on our Toys, Books and Materials](#) – Montessori Schools ; [Defining Diversity: Beyond Race And Gender : NPR](#) ; [How You Can Support the #WeNeedDiverseBooks Campaign](#)

## Doing a Diversity Audit

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Now that we have some background information on diversity/inclusion and what it is we are looking for; our next step is to do an audit of our collection(s) to determine if we have curated diverse/inclusive collections. Whatever our immediate service community may look like, our goal is to have diverse/inclusive collections to create global citizens. If we know that books inform, educate and develop compassion (which we do), then our goal is to be as inclusive as possible to help create a well-rounded and well-informed populace. This goal cannot be achieved without a diverse/inclusive collection from our patrons to select materials from.

### Two Types of Audits to Perform:

1. An overall collection audit, which should be done on a yearly basis (or every few years if you develop the practice of doing book order audits)
2. A book order audit, which should be done on each book order before you submit them for purchase

### How to Do a Collection Audit

Please note: This is my process. You may develop a process that works better for you. My process has changed over time and I like having a saved database as opposed to a simple tally sheet. But at its most basic, a simple tally sheet works. I have also found it depends on what type of ILS your library system has.

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## Doing the Initial Audit: Collecting the Data

The first step is to go through and do a manual count of each title in our collection, indicating what, if any, types of diversity are represented are in the title. This is the most time-consuming part of the process and involves a lot of research. You want to be as thorough as possible.

1. Run a **shelf list** for the collection or part of the collection you wish to audit.
  - a. For my purposes, I am doing my YA collection.
2. If your ILS is compatible, **import your shelf list into an Excel spreadsheet**.
  - a. I printed off my spreadsheet and put it in a three-ring binder making it easy to reference.
3. Add tally column headers (either by hand or in Excel) for each element you are looking for. For example, Black/African American, Asian American, LatinX, Native American, LGBTQ, Disability, etc. You can have as many categories as you would like. See the example below (copyright in the picture for source):

### Diverse Library Inventory

How do books in our library reflect diversity in our world? Use the table below to record your observations about the gender and ethnicity of the author (★) and main characters (|= tallies). Total the columns to see your results.  
A star ★ = author. A tally mark |= = main character. Not Human = Use this column to record animals or other non-human characters.

#	Book Title	Author	Black		Asian		Latino/Hispanic		White		First/ Native Nation	Other Non-White	Not Human: Animal, Alien, etc.	Person with disabilities	L.G. STI Q	
			M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
ex:	<i>The Cat in the Hat</i>	Dr. Seuss														
ex:	<i>The Year of the Book</i>	Andrea Cheng				★										
1																
2																
3																
4																
5																
6																
7																
8																
9																
10																

Total authors: \_\_\_\_\_  
Total characters: \_\_\_\_\_

What do you notice when you total up your observations? What types of books would you like to add to make your collection more diverse?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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4. I recommend adding an additional category for Own Voices because not all diversity is Own Voices and that distinction can be important.



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- For reference, print off a variety of book lists that represent your categories. I created a book list folder of these lists to help in RA as well as collection audits.
- Go through and mark each category for each title, making a tally mark next to each title. This is where having it in excel is helpful because you can save your ongoing list.
  - At one point I went through each title with co-workers as we discussed if the title had diversity and what that diversity looked like. You will get to know your collection better during this process.

Author	Title	Life	YTD	Prev	Add	LastCircDate	POC	GL	Dis	OV	AA	Asian	Lat	NA	Notes
	My true love gave to me : twelve holiday stories	3	0		10/27/2014	4/9/2015									
	My true love gave to me : twelve holiday stories	0	0		6/21/2016	6/21/2016									
	Summer days and summer nights : twelve love stories	3	2	1	6/21/2016	5/20/2017									
	Unnatural Creatures : Stories Selected by Neil Gaiman	15	0	1	5/9/2013	7/14/2016									
	Violent ends : a novel in seventeen points of view	5	1	2	9/18/2015	8/30/2017	1	1							
	Zombies vs. unicorns	20	0		11/16/2010	10/9/2015	1	1							
Abdel-Fattah, Randa, author.	The lines we cross	3	3		7/10/2017	8/29/2017									
Ahdieh, Renele, author.	The rose & the dagger [The wrath and the dawn book 2]	2	2		4/13/2017	8/26/2017									

## Analyzing the Data

Now comes the math part. If you are using Excel, it will do the counts for you. If not, you must count by hand. Either way works.

- Numbers you need:
  - Total number of titles in your collection
  - Total number of titles in each of your categories
- Then you calculate the percentage. In the end, you will have an idea of what percentage of your collection is represented in each category.
- You can then compare these to your target numbers to decide if you are comfortable with where you are at or if you need to go in and order specifically to meet your goals.

**Formula:** Number of Titles in Category X Divided by Total Number of Titles in Collection = Percentage of Collection Represented by Category X

*For example:*

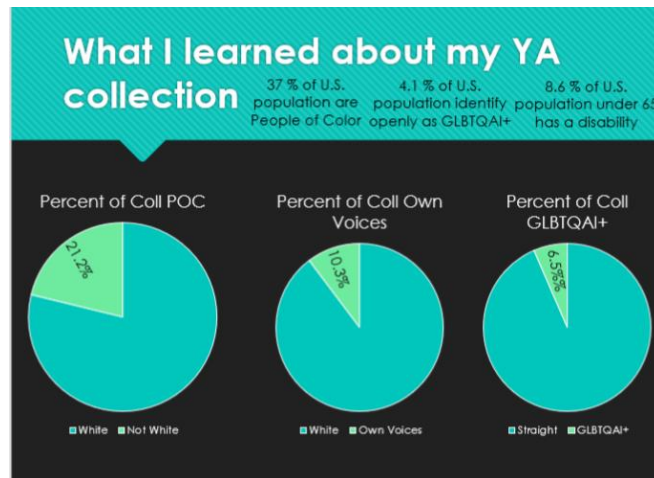
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Total number of titles in collection: 1394

Total number of titles that have POC characters in the collection: 289

Percentage of the collection that has POC representation: 20.7%

289 divided by 1394 is 20.7%



2.2 % of our YA collection features a character with a disability

## *How I Use this Information*

I use this information to make sure that my YA collection isn't overwhelmingly white cishet male/female with no characters with disabilities. When I find gaps, I go through and do targeted orders. For example, this summer I worked really hard to increase the number of LGBTQAI+ in my collection. I went through each letter and found lists of reputable titles and checked them against my collection. My LGBTQAI+ numbers went up from 2.3% to 5.7%.

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As an added benefit, when a teen comes in asking for a specific type of book, I have a better ready list in my brain that I can quickly recommend.

## *Doing a Book Order Audit*

I do the same process in an informal way for each book order before submitting it. I print it off, make notes in the margins, and make sure that my book order isn't overwhelmingly white cis het.

## **Schedule**

- Complete Collection Audit: Yearly
- Book Order Audit: Whenever you order
- Sectional Audit: Develop a schedule that works for you. For example, because June is Pride Month, I go through and do a LGBTQAI+ collection audit in April to make sure I have a good number of titles for the month.

## **Doing a Random Sample for Larger Collections**

If you have a larger collection, you can do a random sample and extrapolate your data to help you analyze the collection. For information about collection sampling see:

- [Library Collection Assessment Through Statistical Sampling](#)
- [Random Sampling: A Tool for Library Research](#)



## Things to Consider

What types of representation will you consider? For example, must it be the main character or is a secondary supporting character going to count in your tallies. You can have extended categories for this if you would like.

Not all representation is necessarily good representation. This is an important point to consider when doing your collection audit. This is also why keeping a separate category for Own Voices is important. Some tropes to be aware of and look for include:

- The Noble Savage
- The White Savior
- The Magical Negro
- The Mystical Shaman
- Killing the Gays  
Trope: describes “commonly recurring literary and rhetorical devices, motifs or clichés in creative works”.

Some stereotypes you’ll want to look for include:

- The angry black woman
- Youth of color always being depicted as gang members
- Jewish books always being about the Holocaust
- POC books always being about slavery or the Civil Rights movement
- LGBTQ books always being about coming out
- Refrigerating females
- Unlikeable girls
- Fat shaming
- “Not Like Other Girls”  
Stereotype: “a widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type of person or thing.”

**Resources/Sources:** [5 YA Tropes To Avoid](#); [TV Tropes](#); [Not Like Other Girls: Toxic Archetypes of Young Adult Literature](#); [Really Useful Links for Writers: Tropes and Clichés](#)

Remember to examine your own internalized biases and privilege.

This is where being involved in the YA community can be of great assistance. There are a lot of great people sharing titles on Twitter and other social media that has raised my awareness of Own Voices authors. Check out the #OwnVoices tag on Twitter for more on Own Voices.

Kirkus is now including ethnicity/race of characters in every YA review and that Novelist is a good resource for finding author ethnicity.

Your audit is only as good as your research. If you don’t put in the effort to really examine each title, you won’t necessarily have good numbers or good information.

## **Additional Resources: Book Lists and New Releases**

### ***Diversity in YA (General)***

[We Need Diverse Books | Official site of the #WeNeedDiverseBooks](#)

[Reading While White](#)

[Rich In Color](#)

[Book Lists | Diversity in YA - \*www.diversityinya.com/category/book-lists/\*](#)

[Diversity in Young Adult and Middle Grade \(1351 books\) - Goodreads](#)

[31 Young Adult Books With Diverse Characters Literally Everyone](#)

[Diversity YA Life: Diverse Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror - The Hub](#)

[Diversity YA Life: Urban Fiction - The Hub](#)

[Rich in Color | Reading & Reviewing Diverse YA Books - \*richincolor.com/\*](#)

[Diversify YA Life: Horror with Diverse Characters](#)

[50 Years of Diversity in Young Adult Literature by Edith Campbell](#)

### ***Asian American Protagonists***

[Best Asian-American Teen Fiction \(156 books\) - Goodreads](#)

[A Round-Up of Awesome Asian American Protagonists in YA Lit](#)

[11 Young Adult Novels By Asian-American Authors - Bustle](#)

### ***LatinX Representation***

[Latinx Ya Shelf - Goodreads](#)

[13 Upcoming YA Books By Latinx Authors To Start Getting Excited](#)

[9 Books By Latinx Authors I Wish I Had As A Teenager - Bustle](#)

[Latinxs in Kid Lit - \*https://latinosinkidlit.com/\*](#)

## ***Native American Representation***

[American Indians in Children's Literature](#)

[#OwnVoices Representation: Native American Authors - YA Interrobang](#)

[Teen Books With Native American Characters and Stories \(66 books\)](#)

[Some thoughts on YA lit and American Indians - American Indians in Children's Literature/Debbie Reese](#)

[Books Outside The Box: Native Americans - The Hub](#)

[Teen Books by Native Writers to Trumpet Year-Round | School Library](#)

## ***POC Leads***

[10 Diverse Books by YA Authors of Color to Read in 2017 | Teen Vogue](#)

[Faces of Color on 2017 YA Books - Book Riot](#)

[12 Young Adult Novels With POC Protagonists - Bustle](#)

[14 YA Books About LGBTQ People of Color - The B&N Teen Blog](#)

[BrownBookShelf](#)

## ***LGBTQAI+***

YA Pride (formerly Gay YA) : [YA Pride \(@YA\\_Pride\) | Twitter](#)

[30 Essential LGBT Books for YA Readers - AbeBooks](#)

[100 Must-Read LGBTQIA YA Books - Book Riot](#)

[23 of Our Most Anticipated LGBTQA YA Books of 2017 - The B&N](#)

[72 Must-Read YA Books Featuring Gay Protagonists - Epic Reads](#)

## ***Disability in YA Lit***

[Disability in Kidlit — Reviews, articles, and more about the portrayal of ...](#)

[People First: Disabilities in YA Lit - The Hub](#)

## ***Feminist YA***

[50 Crucial Feminist YA Novels - The B&N Teen Blog](#)

[34 Young Adult Books Every Feminist Will Love - BuzzFeed](#)

[100 Young Adult Books for the Feminist Reader | Bitch Media](#)

## ***Body Acceptance***

[5 Body-Positive YA Reads to Take to the Beach - The B&N Teen Blog](#)

[Celebrating Every Body: 25 Body Image Positive Books for Mighty Girls](#)

[7 Body Positive YA Books That Slay | Brit + Co](#)

[Julie Murphy's 'Dumplin' And 6 Other Body Positive YA Novels - Bustle](#)

## ***Religious Diversity in YA***

[#FSYALit at Teen Librarian Toolbox](#)

[Rich in Color | Six YA Books with Middle Eastern or Muslim Protagonists](#)

[Diversity in YA Literature: Muslim Teens - The Hub](#)

[Jewish Themed Young Adult Books, Not About The Holocaust](#)

[The Big Five \(+1\) in YA: Atheism and Agnosticism - The Hub](#)

[The Big Five \(+1\) in YA: Buddhism - The Hub](#)

## ***Mental Health in YA***

[#MHYALit at Teen Librarian Toolbox](#)

[29 YA Books About Mental Health That Actually Nail It - BuzzFeed](#)

[16 YAs That Get it Right: Mental Health Edition - The B&N Teen Blog](#)

[YA novels that get real about mental health - HelloGiggles](#)

[11 YA Novels That Deal With Mental Health Issues - Bustle](#)

[10 Must-Read YA Books That Also Talk About Mental Health - Healthline](#)

## *Socio-Economic Diversity in YA Lit*

[Socio-Economic Diversity in YA Lit](#)

[Poverty in YA Literature](#)

[Rich Teen, Poor Teen: Books that depict teens living in poverty](#)

[#SJYALit: A Bibliography of MG and YA Lit Featuring Homeless Youth](#)

## *New Releases*

[YA Books Central](#) - [www.yabookscentral.com/](http://www.yabookscentral.com/)

Teen Reads - [www.teenreads.com](http://www.teenreads.com)

Book Riot - [www.bookriot.com](http://www.bookriot.com)

Barnes and Noble Teen Blog - [www.barnesandnoble.com/blog/teen/](http://www.barnesandnoble.com/blog/teen/)

YA Interrobang - [www.yainterrobang.com](http://www.yainterrobang.com)

YA Lit - [www.yalut.com](http://www.yalut.com)

Epic Reads - [www.epicreads.com](http://www.epicreads.com)

Pop Crush – [www.popcrush.com](http://www.popcrush.com)

Bustle - [www.bustle.com](http://www.bustle.com)

Adventures in YA - [www.adventuresinya.com](http://www.adventuresinya.com)

## *Coming Soon*

[17 Upcoming YA by Authors of Color: Bustle](#)

\*with assistance from TLTer Heather Booth and Robin Willis