This delightful publication represents a commitment by the author to enlarge the cultural experiences of children through exposure to children’s books. It is sponsored by the United States Board on Books for Young People (USBBY), and the author quotes the founder of the international organisation (IBBY) that peaceful coexistence can begin with international literary and artistic exposure of literature to children of the world.

The opening chapter discusses the dilemmas in publishing anglophone books with international contexts: those written by authors who live in English-speaking countries and write about another culture, English-speaking authors who have personal experience in another culture and write from that perspective and international authors who write about their own culture and rely on translation to circulate the title in English. All these situations have particular difficulties. The author of Chapter 2, Barbara Lehman, explores the meaning of reading globally, which she sees as a major responsibility for anyone influencing children’s reading. She uses teaching examples where books from different cultures embody unique cultural perspectives but highlight connections between people distant in geography and culture (e.g., first voting experiences in South Africa and the US, coming of age stories in Namibia and the US). There is always the possibility of reinforcing stereotypical literary images and characterisations if the authors are not ‘insiders’, but in other ways these books speak to other cultures that would not otherwise be exposed to this form of knowledge; and in its literary analysis adult facilitators can be conscious of the importance of developing thoughtful, critical responses to such literature.

The bulk of the book is an annotated bibliography. It includes a selection of acclaimed titles published in English, 2005-2010. There are only a few folk tales in the collection, since it was felt that this was an easily accessible list. All the bibliographic entries follow the same format: author/editor, translator where appropriate, title, illustrator where appropriate, publisher and date of publication. Alternative titles are listed if appropriate, as well as ISBNs, pagination, approximate reading level, cultural relevance and genre. For each there is a scholarly, critical commentary, ending with any major awards received. There are notes about the author/illustrator’s country of origin or current residency. Naturally there could be debate about the titles selected or not selected for inclusion, and obviously editorial decisions are part of the quality of the book.

Considering the thorough approach, the book’s international coverage is staggering. Publications from over 90 countries are included, and there is a chapter on multinational books. There are 46 Australian titles and five NZ titles. There are web addresses for online exploration as well as details of print resources. A further chapter discusses the major international children’s literary awards and the major US awards within the 2005-2010 timeframe. The book concludes with an author/translator/illustrator index and a title index.
This book is an encyclopaedia of international children’s literature. The early chapters are a thorough preparation for the philosophy of the book and treatment of the bibliography that follows. It is bountiful in its offerings, scholarly in its bibliographic detail and intensely engaging for anyone involved in children’s literature.

Heather Fisher
New England Girls’ School