

## Case Study 1: Reading – “The Story That Didn’t See Me”

It was a Tuesday morning in Ms. Carter’s 7th-grade reading class. The students were gathered in groups, reading *Little House on the Prairie* as part of their unit on “classic American literature.” The walls were lined with colorful posters about literary elements, but none featured authors or characters who reflected the diverse group of students sitting in the room. As Ms. Carter read aloud, her students followed along, highlighting examples of character development and setting descriptions.

When the class paused to discuss the story, Janelle raised her hand. “Why don’t we ever read books where people look like us?” she asked quietly. Ms. Carter smiled kindly but moved on, reminding students to focus on “the author’s message about perseverance.” Several students exchanged glances, their expressions a mix of confusion and disinterest. Later, when students were asked to write a reflection on how they connected with the main character, most struggled. The setting, a pioneer family moving west, felt distant from their own lives in the city.

By the end of class, Janelle and a few others sat silently, completing the assignment but without enthusiasm. The lesson had met its academic goals, students analyzed character traits and setting, but something deeper was missing. No one in the story looked, talked, or lived like them. The students had learned about literature, but not about themselves.