

## Contemporary Immigrant Experiences in Children's Books

Prepared by the EMIERT Children's Committee  
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### Picture Books

Atwell, Debby. **The Thanksgiving Door**. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002.  
After burning their Thanksgiving dinner, Ann and Ed head for the New World Cafe, where they are welcomed by an immigrant family into an unusual celebration that gives everyone cause to be thankful.

Bercaw, Edna Coe. **Halmoni's Day**. Pictures by Robert Hunt. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, 2000.  
Jennifer, a Korean American, is worried that her grandmother, visiting from Korea, will embarrass her on her school's Grandparents' Day, but the event brings her understanding and acceptance.

Bunting, Eve. **One Green Apple**. Illustrated by Ted Lewin. New York: Clarion Books, 2006.  
While on a school field trip to an orchard to make cider, a young immigrant named Farah gains self-confidence when the green apple she picks perfectly complements the other students' red apples.

Cheng, Andrea. **Goldfish and Chrysanthemums**. Illustrated by Michelle Chang. New York: Lee & Low Books, 2003.  
A Chinese American girl puts her goldfish into a fish pond that she creates and borders with chrysanthemums in order to remind her grandmother of the fish pond she had back in China.

Colato Lainez, Rene. **Waiting for Papa**. Illustrations by Anthony Accardo = Esperando a Papá Ilustrado por Anthony Accardo. Houston, TX: Piñata Books, 2004.  
When a young boy and his mother come to the United States from El Salvador, leaving his father behind, the boy misses his father very much and wants to do something special to show him how much he cares.

Grant, Karima. **Sofie and the City**. Illustrated by Janet Montecalvo. Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mills Press, 2006.  
When Sofie calls her grandmother in Senegal on Sundays, she complains about the ugliness of the city she now lives in, but her life changes when she makes a new friend.

Gunning, Monica. **America, My New Home**: poems. Illustrations by Ken Condon. Honesdale, Pa.: Boyds Mills Press, 2004.  
Poems describe a young Jamaican immigrant's new experiences as she faces life in the United States, including hearing new languages, loneliness, and visiting Washington, D.C., the circus, and a library.

Hoffman, Mary. **The Color of Home**. Pictures by Karin Littlewood. New York: Phyllis Fogelman Books, 2002.

Hassan, newly-arrived in the United States and feeling homesick, paints a picture at school that shows his old home in Somalia as well as the reason his family had to leave.

Johnston, Tony. **Fishing Sunday**. Pictures by Barry Root. New York: Tambourine Books, 1996. A young boy is embarrassed by his grandfather's old Japanese ways, but on one of their Fishing Sundays, he learns to see Grandfather in a new light.

Kurtz, Jane. **In the Small, Small Night**. Pictures by Rachel Isadora. New York: Greenwillow Books, 2005.

Kofi can't sleep in his new home in the United States, so his older sister Abena soothes his fears about life in a different country by telling him two folktales from their native Ghana .

Mak, Kam. **My Chinatown** : one year in poems. New York: HarperCollins, 2002.

A boy adjusts to life away from his home in Hong Kong, in the Chinatown of his new American city.

Medina, Jane. **The Dream on Blanca's Wall**: poems in English and Spanish = El sueño pegado en la pared de Blanca: poemas en Inglés y Español. Illustrations by Robert Casilla. Honesdale, PA: Wordsong, 2004.

Poems describe the life of an immigrant family's young daughter who dreams of being a teacher.

Miller, Elizabeth. **Just Like Home**; illustrated by Mira Reisberg; Spanish translation by Teresa Mlawer = Como en mi tierra. Ilustrado por Mira Reisberg. Morton Grove, IL: A. Whitman, 1999.

A young girl's first sights and experiences in the United States are sometimes familiar "just like home."

Mobin-Uddin, Asama. **My Name is Bilal**. Illustrated by Barbara Kiwak. Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mills Press, 2005.

When Bilal and his sister transfer to a school where they are the only Muslims, they must learn how to fit in while staying true to their beliefs and heritage.

Nobisso, Josephine. **In English, of Course**. illustrated by Dasha Ziborova. Westhampton Beach, N.Y.: Gingerbread House, 2002.

Josephine tries to tell her new American class about her life in Naples, Italy, but her teacher misunderstands what she is saying and thinks she grew up on a farm.

Pak, Soyung. **Sumi's First Day of School Ever**. Illustrated by Joung Un Kim. New York: Viking, 2003.

By the time Sumi finishes her first day of school, she decides that school is not as lonely, scary, or mean as she had thought. Other books by the author include: *A Place to Grow* (2002), *Dear Juno* (1999).

Park, Frances. **The Have a Good Day Cafe.** Illustrations by Katherine Potter. New York: Lee & Low Books, 2005.

Mike's grandmother, who has moved from Korea to live with Mike and his family in the United States, inspires him to suggest an idea to help their floundering food cart business.

Perez, Amada Irma. **My Diary from Here to There** / story, Amada Irma Perez; illustration, Maya Christina Gonzalez = *Mi diario de aquí a allá* / cuento, Amada Irma Perez ; ilustraciones, Maya Christina Gonzalez. San Francisco, Calif.: Children's Book Press, 2002. A young girl describes her feelings when her father decides to leave their home in Mexico to look for work in the United States.

Perry, Marie Fritz. **A Gift for Sadia.** Northfield, MN: Buttonweed Press, 2004.

A young Somali girl immigrates to Minnesota and through the friendship of a wounded Canada goose learns how to accept her new life in America.

Recorvits, Helen. **My Name is Yoon.** Pictures by Gabi Swiatkowska. New York: Frances Foster Books, 2003.

Disliking her name as written in English, Korean-born Yoon, or "shining wisdom," refers to herself as "cat," "bird," and "cupcake," as a way to feel more comfortable in her new school and new country.

Robles, Kuwento Anthony D. **Lakas and the Manilatown Fish** = *Si lakas at ang isdang Manilatown*. Illustration/ paglalarawan, Carl Angel ; translation/pagsasalin, Eloisa D. deJesus, Magdalena de Guzman. San Francisco, CA: Children's Book Press: Distributed by Publishers Group West, 2003.

A boy, his father, and an increasing number of people rush through the streets of San Francisco's historic Filipino American neighborhood, Manilatown, in pursuit of a fish that can talk and jump and play. *Lakas and the Makibaka Hotel* is a second book about the same boy.

Say, Allen. **Music for Alice.** Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004.

A Japanese American farmer recounts her agricultural successes and setbacks and her enduring love of dance. Based on the true-life story of Alice Sumida, who with her husband Mark, established the largest gladiola bulb farm in the country during the last half of the twentieth century.

Shin, Sun Yung. **Cooper's Lesson.** Illustrated by Kim Cogan. Korean translation by Min Paek. San Francisco, CA: Children's Book Press, 2004.

When Cooper, a biracial Korean-American boy, feels uncomfortable trying to speak Korean in Mr. Lee's grocery, his bad behavior eventually leads to a change in his attitude.

Yang, Belle. **Hannah is My Name.** Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press, 2004.

A young Chinese girl and her parents immigrate to the United States and try their best to assimilate into their San Francisco neighborhood while anxiously awaiting the arrival of their green cards.

## **Fiction**

Alegría, Malin. **Estrella's Quinceañera**. New York: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2006.

Estrella's mother and aunt are planning a gaudy, traditional quinceañera for her, even though it is the last thing she wants.

Alvarez, Julia. **How Tía Lola Came to Visit Stay**. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001.

Although ten-year-old Miguel is at first embarrassed by his colorful aunt, Tía Lola, when she comes to Vermont from the Dominican Republic to stay with his mother, his sister, and him after his parents' divorce, he learns to love her.

Banerjee, Anjali. **Maya Running**. New York: Wendy Lamb Books, 2005.

Maya, a Canadian of East Indian descent, struggles with her ethnic identity, infatuation with a classmate, and the presence of her beautiful Bengali cousin, Pinky, who comes for a visit bearing a powerful statue of the god Ganesh, the Hindu elephant boy.

Banks, Jacqueline Turner. **A Day for Vincent Chin and Me**. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001.

Although Tommy, a Japanese-American sixth-grader, has serious doubts when his mother starts organizing a rally to fight racism, once he and his friends find a cause of their own he gains more understanding of her motives.

Brown, Jacquelyn M. **Little Cricket**. New York: Hyperion Books for Children, 2004.

After the upheaval of the Vietnam War reaches them, twelve-year-old Kia and her Hmong family flee from the mountains of Laos to a refugee camp in Thailand and eventually to the alien world of Saint Paul, Minnesota.

Budhos, Marina Tamar. **Ask Me No Questions**. New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2006.

Fourteen-year-old Nadira, her sister, and their parents leave Bangladesh for New York City, but the expiration of their visas and the events of September 11, 2001, bring frustration, sorrow, and terror for the whole family.

Canales, Viola. **The Tequila Worm**. New York: Wendy Lamb Books, 2005.

Sofia grows up in the close-knit community of the barrio in McAllen, Texas, then finds that her experiences as a scholarship student at an Episcopal boarding school in Austin only strengthen her ties to family and her "comadres."

Cheng, Andrea. **Honeysuckle House**. Asheville, NC: Front Street, 2004.

An all-American girl with Chinese ancestors and a new immigrant from China find little in common when they meet in their fourth grade classroom, but they are both missing their best friends and soon discover other connections.

Colato Lainez, Rene. **I am Rene, the Boy**. Illustrations by Fabiola Graullera Ramirez = Soy René, el niño. Ilustrado por Fabiola Graullera Ramírez. Houston, TX: Piñata Books, 2005. When Rene learns that in the United States his name is also a girl's name, he does some research and relates the name's meaning and letters to his homeland of El Salvador and the things that make him special.

Crew, Linda. **Children of the River**. New York: Delacorte Press, 1989. Having fled Cambodia four years earlier to escape the Khmer Rouge army, seventeen-year-old Sundara is torn between remaining faithful to her own people and enjoying life in her Oregon high school as a "regular" American.

Cruz, Maria Colleen. **Border Crossing**: a novel. Houston, TX: Piñata Books, 2003. Eleven-year-old Cesi knows all about her mother's Cherokee and Irish family but little about her father's Mexican heritage, and when she finds no answers at home in California, she sets out on alone for Tijuana.

Cunningham, Laura. **The Midnight Diary of Zoya Blume**. New York: Laura Geringer Books, 2005.

While her adoptive American mother is away, twelve-year-old Zoya confides in her diary her revived fears about the Buka, an old woman who waits in the shadows to snatch children, and confronts some truths about her early childhood in her native Russia.

De la Cruz, Melissa. **Fresh off the Boat**. New York: HarperCollins, 2005.

When her family emigrates from the Philippines to San Francisco, California, fourteen-year-old Vicenza Arambullo struggles to fit in at her exclusive, all-girl private school.

Danticat, Edwidge, **Behind the Mountains**. New York: Orchard Books, 2002.

Writing in the notebook which her teacher gave her, thirteen -year-old Celiane describes life with her mother and brother in Haiti as well as her experiences in Brooklyn after the family finally immigrates there to be reunited with her father.

**First Crossing**: stories about teen immigrants. Edited by Donald R. Gallo. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press, 2004.

Stories of recent Mexican, Venezuelan, Kazakh, Chinese, Romanian, Palestinian, Swedish, Korean, Haitian, and Cambodian immigrants reveal what it is like to face prejudice, language barriers, and homesickness along with common teenage feelings and needs.

Fleming, Candace. **Lowji Discovers America**. New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2005.

A nine-year-old East Indian boy tries to adjust to his new life in suburban America.

Herrera, Juan Felipe. **Downtown**. New York: Scholastic Press, 2005.

From June of 1958 to June of 1959, Juanito tries to stay out of mischief and be good as he, his mother, and his father move around the state of California, never quite feeling at home.

Himmelblau, Linda. **The Trouble Begins**. New York: Delacorte Press, 2005.

Reunited with his family for the first time since he was a baby, fifth grader Du struggles to adapt to his new home in the United States.

Jaramillo, Ann. **La Linea**. New Milford, CT: Roaring Brook Press, 2006.

When fifteen-year-old Miguel's time finally comes to leave his poor Mexican village, cross the border illegally, and join his parents in California, his younger sister's determination to join him soon imperils them both.

Johnston, Tony. **Any Small Goodness**: a novel of the barrio. Illustrations by Raul Colon. New York: Blue Sky Press, 2001.

Arturo and his family and friends share all kinds of experiences living in the barrio of East Los Angeles--reclaiming their names, playing basketball, championing the school librarian, and even starting their own gang.

Lombard, Jenny. **Drita, My Homegirl**. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2006.

When ten-year-old Drita and her family, refugees from Kosovo, move to New York, Drita is teased about not speaking English well, but after a popular student named Maxine is forced to learn about Kosovo as a punishment for teasing Drita, the two girls soon bond.

Look, Lenore. **Ruby Lu, Empress of Everything**. Illustrated by Anne Wilsdorf.

New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2006.

After Ruby Lu's deaf cousin, Flying Duck, and her parents come from China to live with her, Ruby finds life challenging as she adjusts to her new family, tries to mend her rocky relationship with her friend Emma, and faces various adventures in summer school.

Ly, Many. **Home is East**. New York: Delacorte Press, 2005.

After her mother moves out, a ten-year-old Cambodian American girl and her old-fashioned father leave their home in Florida to begin a new life in San Diego, experiencing turmoil and change as they slowly adjust to their new circumstances.

Lynch, Chris. **Gold Dust**. New York: HarperTrophy, 2002, 2000.

In 1975, twelve-year-old Richard befriends Napoleon, a Caribbean newcomer to his Catholic school, hoping that Napoleon will learn to love baseball and the Red Sox, and will win acceptance in the racially polarized Boston school.

Marsden, Carolyn. **The Gold-Threaded Dress**. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press, 2002.

When Oy and her Thai-American family move to a new neighborhood, her third-grade classmates tease and exclude her because she is different. Also by the author: *The Quail Club* (2006)

Mead, Alice. **Swimming to America**. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005.  
Eighth grader Linda Berati struggles to understand who she is within the context of her mother's secrecy about the family background, her discomfort with her old girlfriends, her involvement with the family problems of her Cuban-American friend Ramon, and an opportunity to attend a school for "free spirits" like herself.

Mikaelsen, Ben. **Red Midnight**. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2002.  
After soldiers kill his family, twelve-year-old Santiago and his four-year-old sister flee Guatemala in a kayak and try to reach the United States.

Mochizuki, Ken. **Beacon Hill Boys**. New York: Scholastic Press, 2002.  
In 1972 in Seattle, a teenager in a Japanese American family struggles for his own identity, along with a group of three friends who share his anger and confusion.

Na, An. **A Step from Heaven**. Asheville, NC: Front Street, 2001.  
A young Korean girl and her family find it difficult to learn English and adjust to life in America.

Nagda, Ann Whitehead. **Dear Whiskers**. Illustrated by Stephanie Roth. New York: Holiday House, 2000.  
Jenny is discouraged when her second grade pen pal turns out to be a new student from Saudi Arabia who does not speak English very well, but as she works with her they slowly become friends.

Namioka, Lensey. **Half and Half**. New York: Delacorte Press, 2003.  
At Seattle's annual Folk Fest, twelve-year-old Fiona and her older brother are torn between trying to please their Chinese grandmother and making their Scottish grandparents happy.

Ortiz Cofer, Judith. **Call Me Maria**: a novel [in letters, poems, and prose]. New York: Orchard Books, 2004.  
Fifteen-year-old Maria leaves her mother and their Puerto Rican home to live in the barrio of New York with her father, feeling torn between the two cultures in which she has been raised.

Osa, Nancy. **Cuba 15**: a novel. New York: Delacorte Press, 2003.  
Violet Paz, a Chicago high school student, reluctantly prepares for her upcoming "quince," a Spanish nickname for the celebration of an Hispanic girl's fifteenth birthday.

Park, Linda Sue. **Project Mulberry**. New York: Clarion Books, 2005.  
While working on a project for an after-school club, Julia, a Korean American girl, and her friend Patrick, learn not just about silkworms, but also about tolerance, prejudice, friendship, and patience.

Pastore, Clare. **Chantrea Conway's Story**: a voyage from Cambodia in 1975. New York: Berkley Jam Books, [2002], 2001.

After her Cambodian mother is murdered by the Khmer Rouge, Chantrea is able to escape to the United States to live with her American father. This is one book in the *Journey to America* series.

Placide, Jaira. **Fresh Girl**. New York: Wendy Lamb Books, 2002.

After having been sent, at a very young age, from New York to live with her grandmother in Haiti, fourteen-year-old Mardi returns to join her parents and to try to shape a new life in Brooklyn.

Sheth, Kashmira. **Blue Jasmine**. New York: Hyperion Books for Children, 2004.

When twelve-year-old Seema moves to Iowa City with her parents and younger sister, she leaves friends and family behind in her native India but gradually begins to feel at home in her new country.

Testa, Maria. **Something about America**. Cambridge, MA.: Candlewick Press, 2005.

After ten years of living in America, a young girl is happy with the new world in which she lives and doesn't understand why her parents yearn to return to their war-torn land of Kosova, yet when a sudden damaging act reestablishes old fears of hate, the Americanized student is forced to reexamine everything she thought she knew.

Tolliver, Ruby C. **Sarita, Be Brave**. Austin, TX: Eakin Press, 1999.

When political unrest in Honduras forces twelve-year-old Sara to flee with her family and make the dangerous journey north to Texas, she faces the challenges of starting a new school and a new life.

Williams-Garcia, Rita. **No Laughter Here**. New York: HarperCollins, 2004.

In Queens, New York, ten-year-old Akilah is determined to find out why her closest friend, Victoria, is silent and withdrawn after returning from a trip to her homeland, Nigeria.

Yoo, David. **Girls for Breakfast**. New York: Delacorte Press, 2005.

As he reflects back on his life in upscale Renfield, Connecticut, on his high school graduation day, Nick Park wonders how much being the only Asian American in school affected his thwarted quest for popularity and a girlfriend.

\*annotations taken from Library of Congress summaries