

# BECOMING AMERICAN

## NEW IMMIGRATION STORIES



## YOUNG ADULT READING LIST

*Reading List Selected by Hazel Rochman*

### Nonfiction

Ashabranner, Brent. ***An Ancient Heritage: The Arab American Minority***. 1991. HarperCollins, \$14.89(0-06-020048-0). Gr. 5–10. With a warming combination of personal involvement and unobtrusive background research, Ashabranner bases his book on informal interviews with a wide variety of Arab Americans, illustrated with lively black-and-white photos by Paul Conklin.

***Half and Half: Writers on Growing Up Biracial and Bicultural***. Ed. By Claudine Chiawei O'Hearn. 1998. Pantheon, paper, \$13 (0-375-70011-0). Gr. 7–12. "Where are you from?" The answers aren't simple for the 18 writers of these personal essays who live and work in the U.S. but aren't sure where they belong.

***Muslims in America***. Ed. by Allen Verbrugge. 2005. Gale/Greenhaven, lib. ed., \$26.96 (0-7377-2315-7); paper, \$17.96 (0-7377-2316-5). Gr. 9–12. With a wide selection of viewpoints, political and personal, historical and contemporary, this excellent collection in the Contemporary Issues Companion series goes behind the stereotypes to show the rich diversity among Muslims in the U.S.

Nye, Naomi Shihab. ***19 Varieties of Gazelle: Poems of the Middle East***. 2002. HarperCollins/Greenwillow, \$16.95 (0-06-009765-5). Gr. 5–10. A Palestinian American raised in St. Louis and Jerusalem, Nye is a writer and anthologist whose poetry, fiction, picture book, and essays speak to a wide audience. This small collection brings together her poems about the Middle East and about being Arab American.

***Red Hot Salsa: Bilingual Poems on Being Young and Latino in the United States***. Ed. by Lori Carlson. 2005. Holt, \$14.95 (0-8050-7616-6). Gr. 8–11. Like *Cool Salsa* (1994), Carlson's new bilingual collection of poems in both Spanish and English includes well-known writers as well as emerging poets, some of them teens. Many talk about the complex challenges of being bicultural.

***Wachale! Poetry and Prose about Growing Up Latino***. Ed. by Ilan Stavans. 2001. Cricket/Marcato, \$16.95 (0-81264-750-5). Gr. 5–8. "My first language was Spanglish," Aurora Levins Morales says in her touching autobiographical poem, "Child of the Americas," about growing up a U.S. Puerto Rican Jew. Like many of the authors in this lively bilingual anthology of poetry, essays, folktales, and stories, she celebrates her history, her diversity, and her rich individual identity.

Warren, Andrea. ***Escape from Saigon: How a Vietnamese Orphan Became an American Boy***. 2004. 128p. illus. Farrar/Melanie Kroupa, \$17 (0-374-32224-4). Gr. 5–12. This stirring photo-essay begins as eight-year-old Long struggles to survive in Vietnam near the end of the war. Just as gripping is his personal conflict: his struggle to become American; his attempt to deny his sadness at what he left behind; and, finally, his pride in his roots.

## Fiction

Buss, Fran Leeper. ***Journey of the Sparrows***. 1991. Yearling, paper, \$6.99 (0-440-40785-0). Gr. 7–12. Nailed into a crate in the back of a truck, Maria, 15, and her sister and little brother, refugees from El Salvador, endure the cruel journey across the border from Mexico and then north to Chicago. There they struggle to find work, always careful to remain “invisible,” so that the authorities won’t arrest them and send them back.

Cofer, Judith Ortiz. ***An Island like You: Stories of the Barrio***. 1995. Orchard, \$21.50 (0-531-08747-6); Puffin, paper, \$6.99 (0-140-38068-X). Gr. 7–12. The contemporary teenage voices are candid, funny, weary, and irreverent in these stories about immigrant kids caught between their Puerto Rican families and the pull and push of the American dream.

Danticat, Edwidge. ***Behind the Mountains***. 2002. Scholastic, \$16.95 (0-439-37200-2). Gr. 5-9. In this installment of the First Person Fiction series about coming to America, Danticat tells the story of a contemporary Haitian American family through the diary entries of a young teen.

***First Crossing: Stories about Teen Immigrants***. Ed. by Don Gallo. 2004. Candlewick, \$16.99 (0-763-62249-4). Gr. 7–10. The contemporary teen immigrants in Gallo’s newest story collection hail from a mix of countries—including Cambodia, Haiti, Kazakhstan, Mexico, and South Korea. Some have left homelands behind for reasons not so different from those of earlier generations; others’ circumstances are more distinctly modern.

Fleischman, Paul. ***Seedfolks***. 1997. Illus. by Judy Pedersen. HarperCollins, \$14.99 (0-0602-7471-9); paper, \$4.99 (0-06447-207-8). Gr. 4–8. Fleischman shows how the different members of a multiethnic urban neighborhood overcome the barriers of language and background to enrich one another and forge new connections.

Jiménez, Francisco. ***The Circuit: Stories from the Life of a Migrant Child***. 1997. Houghton, \$16 (0-395-97902-1); paper, \$10.95 (0-395-95581-5). Gr. 5–12. These exquisite stories, based on the author’s own childhood experience, follow a family of migrant farm workers from the time they leave Mexico to enter the U.S. “under the wire” through years of moving from place to place. Panchito’s dream is elemental: to stay in one place, to go to school without months of interruption. His joy is to return to a place he recognizes.

Marcantonio, Patricia Santos. ***Red Ridin’ in the Hood and Other Cuentos***. Illus. by Renato Alarcão. 2005. Farrar, \$16 (0-374-36241-6). Gr. 3–up. The fractured fairy tale gets cool Latino flavor in this lively collection of 11 traditional stories retold from fresh new viewpoints with witty reversals of class and gender roles, and with full-page powerful pictures that set the drama from crop fields to barrio and skyscraper.

***Memories of Sun: Stories of Africa and America***. Ed. By Jane Kurtz. 2004. Greenwillow, \$15.99 (0-06-051050-1). Gr. 6–10. Avoiding the usual exotic primitive stereotypes, these 12 stories and three poems take readers to contemporary young people in all their diversity and connections.

Na, An. ***A Step from Heaven***. 2001. Front Street, \$16.95 (0-886910-58-8); Puffin, paper, \$7.99 (0-142-50027-5). Gr. 9–12. A Korean American immigrant girl in California is ashamed of her parents, who don’t want her to become too American. The best chapter is about her visit with her father to the immigration office. He is enraged that he’s so helpless because he can’t speak the language and that she’s in control; she’s embarrassed by his behavior even as she feels his anguish.

Osa, Nancy. ***Cuba 15***. 2003. Delacorte, \$15.95 (0-385-73021-7); paper, \$7.95 (0-385-73233-3). Gr. 6–10. Cuban American Osa writes about Violet Paz, growing up in suburban Chicago. The hilarious, cool first-

person narrative veers between slapstick and tenderness, denial and truth, as she sees that her American friends are also locked in crazy families.

Park, Linda Sue. ***Project Mulberry***. 2005. Clarion, \$16 (0-618-47786-1). Gr. 5–8. Conflict over assimilation is part of the drama in Newbery winner Park's latest novel. Julia Song is not at all keen to do a silkworm project for the state fair. It's too Korean; she wants something more American. The unforgettable family and friendship story, the quiet almost unspoken racism, and the excitement of the science make this a great cross-curriculum title.

Say, Allen. ***Grandfather's Journey***. 1993. Houghton/Walter Lorraine, \$16.95 (0-395-57035-2). K–up. This exquisite picture book for older readers is about Say's grandfather's journey—and Say's own journey—from Japan to the U.S., and back and forth again. Everyone who has pored over old family photos or heard stories of "back home" will relate to this story.

Soto, Gary. ***Help Wanted***. 2005. Harcourt, \$17 (0-15-205201-1). Gr. 7–10. From his first book, *Baseball in April and Other Stories* (1990) through these stories, Soto speaks candidly about the conflicts among generations and classes and within individuals. His casual idiom and easy rhythms capture the immediate experience of growing up Latino in California.

Testa, Maria. ***Something about America***. 2005. Candlewick, \$14.99 (0-7636-2528-0). Gr. 6–9. In spare verse, a young girl from Kosovo speaks of her burns scars sustained during the recent war. Even so the eighth-grader feels like a "typical American schoolgirl." Based on an actual incident, this is an excellent choice for readers' theater and classroom discussion.

Triana, Gaby. ***Cubanita***. 2005. HarperCollins, \$15.99 (0-06-056020-7); lib. ed., \$16.89 (0-06-056021-5). Gr. 9–12. Born in Miami to Cuban American parents, Triana writes in a teen's fast hilarious first-person narrative to bring close up Cuban American Isabel Díaz's coming of age. There is no glossary, and that's fine: all the Spanish is clear from the context, and as Isabel says, the best idioms are not translatable anyway.

Yep, Laurence. ***Thief of Hearts***. 1995. HarperCollins, \$15.25 (0-613-02101-0); paper, HarperTrophy, \$6.99 (0-064-40591-5). Gr. 5–8. Stacy, of mixed Chinese and American heritage, has always felt comfortable in her suburban middle school, but when someone calls her a "half-breed," she is shocked into realizing that she is not "just like everyone else."