

16 Asian and Pacific Island Literature

Yvonne Siu-Runyan and Shelby Anne Wolf

Criteria for Excellence

- Books reflect realities and genuine ways of life.
- Books transcend images and offensive stereotyping.
- Books provide accurate information and details such as histories, heritages, cultures, languages, and religions.
- Books reflect the diverse family structures and roles of our changing world rather than promote old notions of family structure and roles.
- Books contain illustrations or photographs that accurately reflect the racial and cultural diversity.
- Books portray the cultural group through skillful plotting, thoughtful characterization, and aesthetically crafted language.

Families/Between Generations

Bercaw, Edna Coe. **Halmoni's Day**. Illustrated by Robert Hunt. Dial, 2000

Bunting, Eve. **Jin Woo**. Illustrated by Chris Soentpiet. Clarion, 2001.

English, Karen. **Nadia's Hands**. Illustrated by Jonathan Weiner. Boyds Mills, 1999.

Gilles, Almira Astudillo. **Willie Wins**. Illustrated by Carl Angel. Lee & Low, 2001.

★ Lee, Marie G. **F Is for Fabuloso**. Avon, 1999.

Lewis, Rose. **I Love You Like Crazy Cakes**. Illustrated by Jane Dyer. Little, Brown, 2000.

★ Lin, Grace. **Dim Sum for Everyone**. Knopf, 2001.

Look, Lenore. **Henry's First-Moon Birthday**. Illustrated by Yumi Heo. Atheneum, 2001.

Look, Lenore. **Love as Strong as Ginger**. Illustrated by Stephen T. Johnson. Atheneum, 1999.

Namioka, Lensey. **Yang the Eldest and His Odd Jobs**. Illustrated by Kees de Kieft. Little, Brown, 2000.

Pak, Soyung. **Dear Juno**. Illustrated by Susan Kathleen Hartung. Viking, 1999.

Seeing Culture through Folk Literature

- ★ Casanova, Mary, reteller. **The Hunter: A Chinese Folktale**. Illustrated by Ed Young. Atheneum, 2000.
- ★ Compestine, Ying Chang. **The Runaway Rice Cake**. Illustrated by Tungwai Chau. Simon & Schuster, 2001.
- Compestine, Ying Chang. **The Story of Chopsticks**. Illustrated by YongSheng Xuan. Holiday House, 2001.
- Holt, Daniel D., selector and translator. **Tigers, Frogs, and Rice Cakes: A Book of Korean Proverbs**. Illustrated by Soma Han Stickler. Shen's Books, 1999
- ★ Kajikawa, Kimiko. **Yoshi's Feast**. Illustrated by Yumi Heo. DK Ink, 2001.
- Myers, Tim. **Basho and the Fox**. Illustrated by Oki S. Han. Marshall Cavendish, 2000.
- San Souci, Daniel, reteller. **In the Moonlight Mist: A Korean Tale**. Illustrated by Eujin Kim Neilan. Boyds Mills, 1999.
- ★ Xuan, YongSheng. **The Dragon Lover and Other Chinese Proverbs**. Shen's Books, 1999.
- ★ Young, Russell. **Dragonsong: A Fable for the New Millennium**. Illustrated by Civi Chen. Shen's Books, 2000.

Appreciating One's Cultural Heritage

- Arcellana, Francisco. **The Mats**. Illustrated by Hermès Alègrè. Kane/Miller, 1999.
- ★ Hamanaka, Sheila, and Ayano Ohmi. **In Search of the Spirit: The Living National Treasures of Japan**. Morrow, 1999.
- ★ Kapono, Henry. **A Beautiful Hawaiian Day**. Illustrated by Susan Szabo. Mutual, 2000.
- McCoy, Karen Kawamoto. **Bon Odori Dancer**. Illustrated by Carolina Yao. Polychrome, 1999.
- Wong, Janet S. **This Next New Year**. Illustrated by Yangsook Choi. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2000.
- ★ Yamate, Sandra S. **Char Siu Bao Boy**. Illustrated by Carolina Yao. Polychrome, 2000.

Living and Learning History

- Cooper, Michael L. **Fighting for Honor: Japanese Americans and World War II**. Clarion, 2000.
- ★ Fa, Lu Chi, with Becky White. **Double Luck: Memoirs of a Chinese Orphan**. Holiday House, 2001.

- Heisel, Sharon E. *Precious Gold, Precious Jade*. Holiday House, 2000.
- ★ Hoobler, Dorothy, and Thomas Hoobler. *The Ghost in the Tokaido Inn*. Philomel, 1999.
 - ★ Park, Linda Sue. *A Single Shard*. Clarion, 2001.
 - ★ White, Ellen Emerson. *The Royal Diaries: Kaiulani, the People's Princess*. Scholastic, 2001.
 - ★ Yin. *Coolies*. Illustrated by Chris Soentpiet. Philomel, 2001.

Navigating Cultures in Modern Times

- ★ Na, An. *A Step from Heaven*. Front Street, 2001.
- ★ Yep, Laurence. *The Amah*. Putnam, 1999.
- ★ Yep, Laurence. *Dream Soul*. HarperCollins, 2000.

Growing Up and Coming of Age

- ★ Germain, Kerry. *Surf's Up for Kimo*. Illustrated by Keoni Montes. Island Paradise, 2000.
- Salisbury, Graham. *Lord of the Deep*. Delacorte, 2001.

Our nation's schools are becoming increasingly multiracial. Though we all like to think of ourselves as open to diversity in our nation and the world, unfortunately, stereotypical thinking still plays a powerful role in how we deal with people whose heritage is different from our own. Stereotyping peoples and cultures has disastrous effects—politically, educationally, socially, and personally—and cannot be erased easily from our hearts and minds.

In the 2000 U.S. census, 281.4 million people were counted in the United States, a 13.2 percent increase from the 1990 census population (Humes & McKinnon, 2000). In March 1999, the Asian and Pacific Islander population was 10.9 million, constituting 4 percent of the total population. But the term "Asian and Pacific Islander" is an umbrella term that encompasses a huge variety. So before we proceed to the books written for and about these peoples, we need to stop and define who they are. The U.S. Census Bureau defines the "Asian" population in the United States as those sharing roots with any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam. "Pacific Islander" refers to those whose heritage begins with any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific islands.

Clearly, the Asian and Pacific Islander population is not a homogeneous group. Instead, it comprises twenty-nine distinct Asian and Pacific Islander subgroups who speak over a hundred different languages and are diverse in terms of national affiliation, history, culture, heritage, and religious belief. Some of the Asian American groups, such as the Chinese and Japanese, have been in the United States for five generations, while others such as the Hmong, Vietnamese, Laotians, and Cambodians are comparatively recent immigrants. Most Pacific Islanders, on the other hand, have been U.S. citizens ever since their homelands were annexed as territories over forty years ago or, as in the case of the Hawaiian Islands, became the fiftieth state in the union.

Because many Asian and Pacific Islander stories have never been written in English or even shared orally with the larger U.S. population, there are large gaps in our understanding of the history of these highly diverse groups—internationally, nationally, and locally. When she returned home in the fall of 2001, for instance, Yvonne asked her relatives about their stories of the period when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. She discovered new information not told in books published on World War II. Specifically, she hadn't known that her Hawaiian aunts were playing in the yard when they saw not U.S. planes but Japanese planes flying toward Pearl Harbor, or that her relatives spent many nights at the mortuary with other local people because their homes were damaged.

When children read and discuss literature that accurately represents Asian and Pacific Island peoples, they learn new ways of thinking and being and will hopefully become better citizens of our multicultural, multiracial world. Without a better understanding of all peoples—that is, appreciating and understanding commonalities as well as contrasts—barriers to world peace will continue to strengthen, and peace will be more difficult to achieve.

Unfortunately, as we reviewed books for this chapter, we found that only a limited number of Asian and Pacific Island books for children were available. This is particularly discouraging because approximately three to five thousand children's books are published annually in the United States. Yvonne vividly remembers growing up in Hawaii and reading only stories about white boys and girls who were middle or upper class; they certainly weren't people with whom she was familiar. The only place she was able to read books that reflected her cultural background was at the public library, where she found Hawaiian folktales. Never did she read stories with Asian children in them other than the classic folktales *The Five Chinese Brothers* and *Peach Boy*. Yvonne's strong interest in folktales is thus no accident. In Shelby's teaching of

multicultural children's literature in her university classes, she has found it difficult to find Asian/Pacific Island literature that extends beyond the old tales into modern times. While folktales are a critical part of any group's heritage, children need to read texts and see images that reflect their current lives. Thus, even in the 1999, 2000, and 2001 books reviewed in this chapter, folktales and historical fiction predominate, and realistic fiction, such as Lensey Namioka's latest story of the Chinese American Yang family or An Na's story of a modern Korean family, are all too rare.

With so few books accurately portraying Asian and Pacific Islanders, children who make up this diverse group will continue to be distanced from the texts they read. In addition, children of other cultural and ethnic groups will continue to stereotype and hold misconceptions about Asian and Pacific Island peoples—Americans as well as indigenous individuals. Teachers can avoid presenting stereotypical and inadequate images by discussing the books being read, as well as the culture(s) represented, before, during, and after reading. But teaching about cultures can be tricky; presenters of Asian and Pacific Island literature are too often unaware of their own stereotypical thinking. Sadly, certain assumptions continue to prevail: Chinese people usually work in banks, restaurants, and laundries; Asian females are submissive; Asian children do well in school; Pacific Islanders are plantation workers. Asian and Pacific Island peoples are not alike; instead, these peoples are diverse and as different from one another as the individuals of any other group.

While we would like to see more books that accurately and thoughtfully portray Asian and Pacific Islanders, we did notice a positive trend—that more stories were written and illustrated by authors and illustrators of the culture portrayed in the text than in the past.

In the annotations for this chapter on Asian and Pacific Island literature for children, we concentrated on authenticity as well as aesthetic qualities (Wolf, Ballentine, & Hill, 1999) using the following criteria:

1. Does the book reflect the realities and ways of life of Asian and Pacific Island peoples? That is, does the book really tell about how the characters live? Or do the realities of life in the book promote stereotypical conceptions? Is the author writing from the point of view of an imagined rather than the actual culture?
 2. Does the book transcend images and offensive stereotyping about Asian and Pacific Island peoples? Are the characters well rounded and complex rather than simplistic? In short, does the book offer other ways of understanding the characters instead of promoting common misinformation?
-

3. Does the book provide accurate information and details such as histories, heritages, cultures, languages, and religions of Asian and Pacific Island peoples? Are the cultural aspects in the book accurate? Does the author explain his or her research process and sources in the book?
4. Does the book reflect the diverse family structures and roles of our changing world? Or does it promote old notions of family structure and roles?
5. Does the book contain illustrations or photographs that accurately reflect the racial and cultural diversity of Asian and Pacific Island peoples? Are the illustrations accurate?
6. Does the book portray the cultural group through skillful plotting, thoughtful characterization, and aesthetically crafted language? Does the language communicate accurate and rich images and engage the reader in the text? If the text incorporates a native language within the English text, is the language used thoughtfully rather than sporadically tossed in to make the story appear authentic?

During the selection process, we quite purposefully omitted books that didn't live up to our criteria. We decided not to include books that took stories from other lands and simply transferred them to an Asian/Pacific Island setting. Demi's *The Emperor's New Clothes* (2000), for example, is a relatively slight retelling of Hans Christian Andersen's original, surprisingly set in China. In her author's note, Demi makes a valiant attempt to relate the Dane's tale to the Chinese concept of "chi," the essence of life, but the argument seems weak and the writing itself too spare.

We also decided not to include books in which an author's genuine interest in a particular culture was still not enough to create an accurate portrayal. Mercer Mayer's *Shibumi and the Kitemaker* (1999), for example, tells of an emperor of a "far-away kingdom" in Japan who builds a garden with high walls to separate his daughter from the squalor of the city. But Shibumi climbs a chestnut tree, and when she sees the horror below, she determines to make a change. She flies away on the biggest kite ever made and warns her father that she will not come down until the city is as lovely as the palace. The rest of the story follows the emperor's attempts to meet his daughter's demands and Shibumi's final return. Although intriguing in its strong political statements, Mayer's story misses in several ways. First of all, although Mayer is intrigued by Japanese culture, he acknowledges in his author's note that "Westerners are rarely allowed to see into the Japanese heart." Thus, the tale of Shibumi is not based on Japanese folk literature but is instead grounded in Mayer's imagined culture. Second, his artwork, all

done on the computer, is visually stunning but lacks association with Japanese art beyond the superficial features of kimonos, cranes, and strong samurai. It is as though Mayer himself is flying high on his computer-generated kite, and his view distances us from Japanese culture rather than bringing us closer.

Finally, we eliminated tales that characterized cultures in pedantic and stereotypical ways. One example is V. J. Pacilio's *Ling Cho and His Three Friends* (2000). This tedious tale of rhymed couplets is set in China, though the author and illustrator have no recognizable experience with the culture. There is no endnote to explain the origin of the story, and the rhymes are forced, with only rare nods to Chinese life. The story recounts how Ling Cho, a prosperous farmer, tries to care for his neighbors. But when he finds a way and his friends ultimately deceive him, the "wise, kind" Ling Cho pedantically denies them further assistance and then endlessly lectures the one man who was the most honest. While the illustrations lighten the weight of the tale, one can't help but wonder whether images that emerge more from the imagination than research might perpetuate harmful stereotypes.

References

- Humes, K., & McKinnon, J. (2000). *The Asian and Pacific Islander population in the United States: March, 1999*. U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Reports, Series P20-529. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Wolf, S. A., Ballentine, D., & Hill, L. (1999). The right to write: Preservice teachers' evolving understandings of authenticity and aesthetic heat in multicultural literature. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 34(1), 130-84.

Families/Between Generations

- 16.1 Bercaw, Edna Coe. **Halmoni's Day**. Illustrated by Robert Hunt. Dial, 2000. ISBN 0-8037-2444-6. Unpaged. (ALL).

This moving, intergenerational story, illustrated in exquisite oil paintings, crosses cultural, language, place, and time barriers. Many young people feel the way Jennifer does when family members are different from the dominant culture. Jennifer's *halmoni*, or grandmother, is visiting from Korea just in time for Grandparents' Day at school. Though Jennifer is excited about the event, she is also worried, because Halmoni does not speak English very well, wears strange clothes, and does not understand U.S. culture. When it is Halmoni's turn to receive her award and share a memory, she talks about her childhood in

war-torn Korea. Halmoni ends her story explaining that the greatest joy of being a grandparent is seeing how the parts of herself, her husband, and her parents live on through her children and their children. (YSR)

- 16.2 Bunting, Eve. **Jin Woo**. Illustrated by Chris Soentpiet. Clarion, 2001. ISBN 0-395-93872-4. 30 pp. (P).

This is a tender tale of a European American family's adoption of Jin Woo, a Korean child, told from the older sibling's point of view. While David's parents can hardly wait for the arrival of their new son, David can. One illustration shows David's parents at the airport, smiling as they first gaze at the baby. But David is somberly watching his parents, wondering about their ability to love him and the new baby as well. Events turn around as David coaxes Jin Woo into his first laugh on the car ride home. More important, after tucking the baby in his crib, both parents concentrate on David, sharing a "letter from Jin Woo" that reassures David about the capacity of his parents' love. Eve Bunting's moving prose is magnified in Soentpiet's stunning illustrations, which are all the more convincing because Soentpiet himself was adopted from Korea. (SAW)

- 16.3 English, Karen. **Nadia's Hands**. Illustrated by Jonathan Weiner. Boyds Mills, 1999. ISBN 1-56397-667-6. Unpaged. (ALL).

As a member of a large Pakistani American family, Nadia has been chosen to be the flower girl for Auntie Laila's wedding. In this role, she will wear a *shalwar* and *kameez* (popular Pakistani clothing) and have her hands painted with *mehndi* (henna paste) in intricate designs. Although she has the usual worries about her role, her real concern is what will happen when she goes to school with "hands that looked as if they belonged to someone else." The story ends on a happy note as Nadia comes to appreciate her heritage through the love of her extended family. The story highlights some of the issues children of dual cultures must face in mainstream school. The illustrations enhance the text with the reddish-gold glow of henna throughout. (SAW)

- 16.4 Gilles, Almira Astudillo. **Willie Wins**. Illustrated by Carl Angel. Lee & Low, 2001. ISBN 1-58430-033-7. Unpaged. (ALL).

Willie is having a bad day. He strikes out in a Little League baseball game, and now he must find a bank to bring to school. Dad

has just what Willie needs—an *alkansiya*, or coconut shell, that has been made into a bank. The best part of the *alkansiya* is that inside is a treasure from his uncle. At the end of the month, Willie's teacher announces that now is the time to unlock their banks. Willie uses a small hammer to crack open his *alkansiya*. To his surprise, the treasure is a San Francisco Giants card dated 1964 with a picture of Willie Mays on it. The children with whom we shared this book commented on Angel's bold, detailed acrylic illustrations and how they capture the expressive faces of Willie and his father. Although many children had eaten coconut, they knew little about the tree or the fruit. They asked many questions about coconut trees, where they grow, what coconuts look like, and how one opens a coconut to get the milk and the meat. (YSR)

- 16.5 ★ Lee, Marie G. *F Is for Fabuloso*. Avon, 1999. ISBN 0-380-97648-X. 176 pp. (I).

Caught between two cultures, Korean and American, Jin-Ha often feels bewildered. Though she loves American food, she still has a craving for hot, spicy, garlicky Korean foods. Jin-Ha's father, a scholar in Korea, now works for a car mechanic. Her mother does not speak much English and embarrasses Jin-Ha in public. When Jin-Ha's mother is embarrassed by another customer in the bank because she doesn't speak English well, she wonders, "What kind of place is America? In Korea no one would ever say 'Learn Korean!' to an American. In fact, if an American spoke any Korean at all, they would probably all be amazed" (p. 2). This sensitive story shows a modern-day immigrant family's struggle to survive in a new country and a young girl's determination to forge a new American identity while at the same time preserve her culture and honor her immigrant parents' values. (YSR)

- 16.6 Lewis, Rose. *I Love You Like Crazy Cakes*. Illustrated by Jane Dyer. Little, Brown, 2000. ISBN 0-316-52538-3. Unpaged. (ALL).

Based on the author's own experience, this tender and loving story chronicles a woman's journey to adopt a baby girl from China. Jane Dyer's watercolors express the mood of the story and complement the text. When this book was shared with parents who have adopted baby girls from China, all agreed that this book does indeed capture their feelings and thoughts. Several had already read this book to their adopted Chinese daughters, reporting that it had a profound influence on the family, opening

up conversations. As one child said to her mother, "I didn't know you went through all that trouble just to adopt me." Following this statement, the mother and father were able to talk about why they chose to adopt their little girl from China. (YSR)

- 16.7 ★ Lin, Grace. **Dim Sum for Everyone**. Knopf, 2001. ISBN 0-375-81082-X. Unpaged. (P).

The author explains that when dining in a dim sum restaurant, you can "tap three fingers on the table" when you want to thank your waiter. So here's a three-finger tap to Lin for serving up this tale of the deliciously varied dishes of dim sum. The text is simple, but the illustrations bring the text to life. A family arrives, selects, and shares their favorite dishes. Some pictures provide captivating views of the bustling restaurant with waitresses rolling their carts of food, waiters pouring tea, and families eating with delight. But the close-up views of the central family—mother, father, and three little girls—are even more charming. The picture of young Mei-Mei peeking over the cart of sweet tofu proves one translation of *dim sum* as "point" (dim) and "heart" (sum)—for Mei-Mei's directed gaze clearly demonstrates her heart's (and stomach's) desire! (SAW)

- 16.8 Look, Lenore. **Henry's First-Moon Birthday**. Illustrated by Yumi Heo. Atheneum, 2001. ISBN 0-689-82294-4. Unpaged. (P).

Jenny's baby brother is having his first moon, or one-month birthday, a traditional Chinese celebration to welcome the newborn. Together, Jenny and her *gnin gnin*, parental grandmother, handle all the preparations—dyeing eggs with the lucky color red, making pigs' feet and ginger soup, and cleaning the house. It might be wise for teachers to point out that the Chinese dialect used throughout the text is Cantonese, not Mandarin. Discussing dialect is important because there are many dialects of Chinese spoken throughout Asia, and all of them are different. Heo's pencil, oil, and collage illustrations are lively and colorful, working cohesively with the story line to capture the spirit of the text. The illustrations have a childlike quality, which gives the reader the impression that Jenny actually drew the pictures herself. After hearing this story, children talked and wrote about the celebrations their families have to welcome newborns. Discussions like these open doors of understanding and appreciation for the many ways all cultures celebrate important events. (YSR)

- 16.9 Look, Lenore. **Love as Strong as Ginger.** Illustrated by Stephen T. Johnson. Atheneum, 1999. ISBN 0-689-81248-5. Unpaged. (ALL).

This intergenerational story, based on the author's own experiences, tells how Katie spends Saturdays with her beloved grandmother, or *gnin gnin*, a cannery worker in Seattle who has large rubber gloves that are *chiubungbung*, or "stinky-stinky." Katie watches her grandmother swing a heavy mallet cracking crabs from morning until evening. Gnin Gnin's hard work buys bus fare to work and a fish for dinner, which she cooks exquisitely with "love as strong as ginger and dreams as thick as black-bean paste." The soft pastel illustrations set a perfect mood and enhance the story of a young girl who gains a deep respect for the grandmother who works so hard yet maintains a noble spirit and an infectious sense of humor. This book can serve as an excellent springboard for students to write about their parents' and grandparents' work and the uniqueness of their own family's cultural heritage. (YSR)

- 16.10 Namioka, Lensey. **Yang the Eldest and His Odd Jobs.** Illustrated by Kees de Kieffe. Little, Brown, 2000. ISBN 0-316-59011-8. 121 pp. (I).

This fourth book in the delightful series about the Yang family describes how First Brother works at a series of jobs to replace his damaged violin, though he loses some enthusiasm for music in the process. The narrator is the third eldest sister who explains the subtle and not-so-subtle differences between Chinese and American culture. She even lets us in on some of the differences among the Chinese and Japanese when she has her first Japanese meal, noting that even the chopsticks differ. The picture of Yingmei taking her first bite of *wasabi* with her hair standing on end is hilarious. Beyond the surface differences in food and utensils, the beauty of this tale lies in the devotion of the Yang family to one another. Indeed, it is family love and Yang the Eldest's rediscovery of the joy of music that bring this story to its uplifting conclusion. (SAW)

- 16.11 Pak, Soyung. **Dear Juno.** Illustrated by Susan Kathleen Hartung. Viking, 1999. ISBN 0-670-88252-6. Unpaged. (ALL).

Juno receives a letter from his grandmother but is disappointed when his parents are too busy to read it to him since he cannot

read Korean. When he opens the letter on his own, Juno discovers a picture of his grandmother and her cat and a dried flower from her garden. When Juno's parents finally read the letter to him, they are surprised at how much he already knows just from the picture. Juno then decides to draw pictures to send to his grandmother because she will understand what he wants to say, even without words. This book shows children that pictures can say as much, maybe more, than words. To understand this concept, children can investigate and experiment with drawing pictures instead of writing words to communicate messages to friends or family members, demonstrating another way of knowing and sharing. (YSR)

Seeing Culture through Folk Literature

- 16.12 ★ Casanova, Mary, reteller. **The Hunter: A Chinese Folktale.** Illustrated by Ed Young. Atheneum, 2000. ISBN 0-689-82906-X. Unpaged. (ALL).

This Chinese tale tells of a brave young hunter, Hai Li Bu, who rescues a pearly snake from the maw of a crane. Offered any reward he desires, he chooses to understand the language of animals so that he can provide sustenance for his village. The gift comes with a stone and a warning, however, for if he ever reveals his secret, he too will turn to stone. The selfless hunter ultimately reveals the secret, but only to save his community. While the tale is a lovely one, the true treasure is Ed Young's illustrations, with black brush-stroke figures stark against warm earth tones. The most moving illustration is that of the hunter offering his truth, with the white of his luminous stone reflected in the tears in his eyes. An added gem is the single red box of Chinese calligraphy that captures the essence of each page. (SAW)

- 16.13 ★ Compestine, Ying Chang. **The Runaway Rice Cake.** Illustrated by Tungwai Chau. Simon & Schuster, 2001. ISBN 0-689-82972-8. Unpaged. (ALL).

Chinese New Year provides a backdrop for this story of a young boy and his family who have enough rice flour to make one *nian-gao*, or holiday rice cake. The cake suddenly comes to life and runs away. When an old woman catches the cake, the Changs let the starving woman eat it even though they are just as hungry. When they return home, neighbors recognize the family's generosity and pitch in to make a sumptuous feast and celebration,

complete with a dragon, firecrackers, and dancers. The tale is enhanced with an informative note on Chinese New Year and two recipes for *nian-gao*. As a first-time illustrator, Tungwai Chau has effectively matched colorful acrylics with the bounty of the text. Because the children who read this book were unfamiliar with Chinese New Year, they found the story intriguing and enjoyed learning about the traditions of another culture. They were also impressed with the compassion of the family. The children loved the colorful, action-oriented illustrations portraying the traditions surrounding the Chinese New Year. (YSR)

- 16.14 Compestine, Ying Chang. **The Story of Chopsticks**. Illustrated by YongSheng Xuan. Holiday House, 2001. ISBN 0-8234-1526-0. Unpaged. (ALL).

Kúai is always hungry. One day when his family is waiting for the food to cool, Kúai uses twigs to pierce food too hot to pick up with his hands. Seeing this new way of eating, his family joins him. To honor Kúai, his mother suggests they call them "Kúai zi" to honor Kúai. At a wedding, Kúai sneaks in sticks. Enamored with this new way of eating, other people get their own sticks. Eventually all the people in town eat with sticks. Before long people are using them in every part of China. At the end of the book, the author provides information about chopsticks along with a recipe for Sweet Eight Treasures Rice Pudding. Xuan's cut-paper illustrations emboldened with strong black lines animate this entertaining story. Though at first glance the illustrations look Japanese, they are in fact Chinese. (YSR)

- 16.15 Holt, Daniel D., selector and translator. **Tigers, Frogs, and Rice Cakes: A Book of Korean Proverbs**. Illustrated by Soma Han Stickler. Shen's Books, 1999. ISBN 1-885-008-10-4. Unpaged. (I).

Holt has compiled an intriguing collection of bilingual Korean-English texts with twenty Korean *sok-dams*, or folk sayings, each written in Korean and English. Each proverb focuses on a significant folk symbol or Korean belief held throughout all of Korean society and reminds readers of basic truths. At the end of the book, Holt categorizes the proverbs into three areas—character, cooperation and accomplishment, and eating—and then brilliantly explains the meaning of each. Stickler's accompanying full-page watercolor illustrations effectively blend color and design to clarify and provide insights into each Korean proverb. This exceptional book is not only a work of art but also a work of

complete with a dragon, firecrackers, and dancers. The tale is enhanced with an informative note on Chinese New Year and two recipes for *nian-gao*. As a first-time illustrator, Tungwai Chau has effectively matched colorful acrylics with the bounty of the text. Because the children who read this book were unfamiliar with Chinese New Year, they found the story intriguing and enjoyed learning about the traditions of another culture. They were also impressed with the compassion of the family. The children loved the colorful, action-oriented illustrations portraying the traditions surrounding the Chinese New Year. (YSR)

- 16.14 Compestine, Ying Chang. **The Story of Chopsticks**. Illustrated by YongSheng Xuan. Holiday House, 2001. ISBN 0-8234-1526-0. Unpaged. (ALL).

Kúai is always hungry. One day when his family is waiting for the food to cool, Kúai uses twigs to pierce food too hot to pick up with his hands. Seeing this new way of eating, his family joins him. To honor Kúai, his mother suggests they call them “Kúai zi” to honor Kúai. At a wedding, Kúai sneaks in sticks. Enamored with this new way of eating, other people get their own sticks. Eventually all the people in town eat with sticks. Before long people are using them in every part of China. At the end of the book, the author provides information about chopsticks along with a recipe for Sweet Eight Treasures Rice Pudding. Xuan’s cut-paper illustrations emboldened with strong black lines animate this entertaining story. Though at first glance the illustrations look Japanese, they are in fact Chinese. (YSR)

- 16.15 Holt, Daniel D., selector and translator. **Tigers, Frogs, and Rice Cakes: A Book of Korean Proverbs**. Illustrated by Soma Han Stickler. Shen’s Books, 1999. ISBN 1-885-008-10-4. Unpaged. (I).

Holt has compiled an intriguing collection of bilingual Korean-English texts with twenty Korean *sok-dams*, or folk sayings, each written in Korean and English. Each proverb focuses on a significant folk symbol or Korean belief held throughout all of Korean society and reminds readers of basic truths. At the end of the book, Holt categorizes the proverbs into three areas—character, cooperation and accomplishment, and eating—and then brilliantly explains the meaning of each. Stickler’s accompanying full-page watercolor illustrations effectively blend color and design to clarify and provide insights into each Korean proverb. This exceptional book is not only a work of art but also a work of

This enchanting retelling of a Korean folktale follows a compassionate woodcutter who saves the life of a deer and is rewarded with a heavenly wife. When she pines for her celestial home, the woodcutter ignores the deer's instructions and gives her the garments she needs to make the passage home. The deer offers him a chance to regain his wife, but he once again forgoes his own desires and allows his elderly mother access to heaven in his place. At this point, the "heavenly king" intervenes, and the woodcutter is rejoined with his family, adding luster to the firmament. The well-researched illustrations are particularly beautiful. Neilan uses strong brush strokes to enhance her acrylics, which are bathed in light and capture the feeling of the world during the Chosun Dynasty of long ago. (SAW)

- 16.19 ★ Xuan, YongSheng. **The Dragon Lover and Other Chinese Proverbs**. Shen's Books, 1999. ISBN 1-885008-11-2. Unpaged. (I).

Based on the original texts found in historical documents, Xuan selected five Chinese proverbs that portray important truths. The timeless wisdom of these proverbs shows us that there is much to learn from the animal kingdom. These five profound yet simple sayings that have helped Chinese people for centuries are written in both Chinese and English. The intricate, vibrant, and delicate illustrations, using cut-paper artwork, objectify and embellish each proverb. Each page contains both English and Chinese text with illustrative borders that enhance the mood of the book. The publisher's note at the end of the book explains the source for each proverb. According to the author, "The value of these morals is so universal that they are worth retelling to our own children, for their application to contemporary life." (YSR)

- 16.20 ★ Young, Russell. **Dragonsong: A Fable for the New Millennium**. Illustrated by Civi Chen. Shen's Books, 2000. ISBN 1-885008-12-0. Unpaged. (ALL).

This wondrous story carries Chiang-An, the youngest dragon, around the world in search of a treasure able to last the next thousand years. As Chiang-An travels the world, he meets a dragon in each place who shares new wisdom and gives him a meaningful gift. When Chiang-An finally flies home, he transforms all he has learned into the gift of hope wrapped in a song. When the other dragons question his gift, Chiang-An sings the

most beautiful song, weaving the themes and melodies of the four dragons he met into one song that fills a person's spirit and heart, providing hope for a brighter tomorrow. The dragons are extremely pleased and agree that Chiang-An deserves to be Keeper of the Mountain. Chen's stunning illustrations of misty mornings, shimmering waters, and opalescent skies splendidly enhance Young's words to create an incredible book for the new millennium. (YSR)

Appreciating One's Cultural Heritage

- 16.21 Arcellana, Francisco. **The Mats**. Illustrated by Hermès Alègrè. Kane/Miller, 1999. ISBN 0-916291-86-3. Unpaged. (ALL).

A young girl growing up in the Philippines learns the importance of traditions and how they are expressed in the gift of mats presented to each family member by her proud and loyal father. Alègrè's vivid drawings, splashed with tropical colors, depict the excitement of the family, the beauty of mats, the uniqueness of each individual, and the reverence for family members who are gone but still cherished. The children who read this book learned that sickness and death occur in cultures other than their own and that it is important to remember the people who have died. *The Mats* is an excellent book to read aloud to children as an introduction to discussing with them the importance of families and traditions in all cultures. Children may draw or write about their own special family celebrations and share the unique qualities of each person within their own cultures. (YSR)

- 16.22 ★ Hamanaka, Sheila, and Ayano Ohmi. **In Search of the Spirit: The Living National Treasures of Japan**. Morrow, 1999. ISBN 0-688-14607-4. 48 pp. (I).

This extraordinary book describes the careful craft of artisans who extend and elaborate on traditions passed down from sixteenth-century Japan. These traditions might have been lost in the mechanization following World War II had the government not had the foresight to offer grants to the "Bearers of Important Intangible Cultural Assets." The one hundred recipients—popularly known as Living National Treasures—use the support to continue their work and train apprentices. Of the one hundred, Hamanaka and Ohmi describe the art of six masters: a *yuzen* dyer

(a kimono artisan), a bamboo weaver, a *bunraku* puppet master, a sword maker, a Noh actor, and a *neriage* potter. While clear photographs and delicate step-by-step paintings detail the art forms, the living treasure of this book lies in its lyrical description of each master's philosophical dedication to his art. (SAW)

- 16.23 ★ Kapono, Henry. **A Beautiful Hawaiian Day**. Illustrated by Susan Szabo. Mutual, 2000. ISBN 1-56647-346-2. Unpaged. (P).

This lavishly illustrated story tells of Kaleo, who finds a magical seashell as she walks along the shoreline. When she puts the seashell to her ear, she closes her eyes and hears a most beautiful sound. Suddenly Kaleo is swept back into time and meets the young King Kamehameha. The young king shows Kaleo his favorite spot at the top of a steep cliff. As Kaleo looks at the magnificent beauty that surrounds her, she tells the king of her home—the tall buildings, pollution, homeless population, and crime. King Kamehameha takes Kaleo to a sacred place where two waterfalls cascade into a pond. He tells her a legend of the waterfall and how it represents eternal love. When the young king returns Kaleo to her time, she realizes the importance of respecting and honoring the ocean, the land, the sky, and the peoples of Hawaii. (YSR)

- 16.24 McCoy, Karen Kawamoto. **Bon Odori Dancer**. Illustrated by Carolina Yao. Polychrome, 1999. ISBN 1-879965-16-X. Unpaged. (ALL).

Keiko has high hopes for performing the traditional dance at the Obon festival, but she can't get her feet to move correctly. With the help of an understanding teacher and good friends, the performance goes well, despite one small mishap with the *kachikachi* sticks. The importance of honoring our ancestors, the beauty of the Obon celebration, and the value of friendship are all depicted in this whimsical book with an important message. While the illustrations are lighthearted and colorful, they effectively convey the beauty of the festival and the dancers' colorful kimonos. This book is an excellent read-aloud for young children interested in the celebrations and traditional clothing of Asian cultures as well as how friends can help one another. After hearing this story, some students commented on the beautiful costumes and many expressed a desire to see a real Obon celebration. (YSR)

- 16.25 Wong, Janet S. **This Next New Year**. Illustrated by Yangsook Choi. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2000. ISBN 0-374-35503-7. Unpaged. (P).

In lyrical, lilting verse, Wong describes Chinese New Year preparations in her Chinese Korean house. The house is swept clean of last year's dust, food is prepared for the celebration, and clothes are washed and pressed for wearing. Choi's animated and energetic double-page illustrations capture the spirit of this important celebration using vibrant, bold colors. The author note at the end of the book also describes Chinese New Year preparations and symbols in the Wong family. Chinese New Year is celebrated by almost all Chinese Americans, so this story is perfect to read to all children. Since children might be confused by the fact that this story is about a Chinese Korean American family, teachers would be wise to point out that the Asian text/words shown in the illustrations are Korean, not Chinese, and that though both Korean and Chinese written languages may look alike, they are in fact different. (YSR)

- 16.26 ★ Yamate, Sandra S. **Char Siu Bao Boy**. Illustrated by Carolina Yao. Polychrome, 2000. ISBN 1-879965-19-4. Unpaged. (ALL).

Charlie loves *char siu bao* (Chinese barbecued pork buns). He brings it to school for lunch every day, but the other children tease him. They wonder how he can eat it and think it looks terrible. Charlie tries eating what the other kids eat, but misses eating *char siu bao*. Then Charlie has an idea. He asks his grandmother to make *char siu bao* to share with his friends. The boys and girls sniff and poke at their *bao*. Then Mike, Charlie's best friend, tentatively takes a bite and announces, "Hey, this is good!" Before long everyone is eating *char siu bao*. This tender story portrays tension between conformity and individuality as well as pride in a culture. At the end, there is a recipe for making *char siu bao*. (YSR)

Living and Learning History

- 16.27 Cooper, Michael L. **Fighting for Honor: Japanese Americans and World War II**. Clarion, 2000. ISBN 0-395-91375-6. 118 pp. (I).

Over the past decade, we've been enlightened about the racially motivated internment of Japanese Americans during World War II through books such as *Baseball Saved Us* by Ken Mochizuki (Lee & Low, 1993), *I Am an American: A True Story of Japanese Internment* by Jerry Stanley (Crown, 1994), and *Bat 6* by Virginia

Euwer Wolff (Scholastic, 1998). *Fighting for Honor* is a welcome addition because it explores the stories of many Japanese Americans who volunteered for army service. The irony of fighting for a country that arrested and interned their families as well as condoned the theft and destruction of their property is clear. What makes the book all the more compelling, however, is the bravery of the 100th/442nd battalion. The battle scenes, especially the dangerous rescue of the "Lost Battalion" and Senator Daniel Inouye's leadership role, are particularly gripping. Black-and-white photographs, a chronology, endnotes, and references all add to the authenticity of the text. (SAW)

- 16.28 ★ Fa, Lu Chi, with Becky White. **Double Luck: Memoirs of a Chinese Orphan.** Holiday House, 2001. ISBN 0-8234-1560-0. 212 pp. (I).

Lu Chi Fa's parents die in 1944 when he is only three years old. Chairman Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution is in progress, and China is in political turmoil and suffering severe poverty. Because times are hard, Lu Chi is shuffled from one relative to another and is eventually sold to a communist chief. Enduring hunger and beatings, he nevertheless survives. In 1969, Lu Chi immigrates to the United States where he makes a new life for himself. At the end of this heartfelt, stirring memoir, a time line of three events is chronicled: the year and the Chinese astrological sign, Lu Chi's experiences, and events of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. This time line provides an important backdrop to help readers make sense of the events that occurred during Lu Chi Fa's life and how these events were intertwined. (YSR)

- 16.29 Heisel, Sharon E. **Precious Gold, Precious Jade.** Holiday House, 2000. ISBN 0-8234-1432-9. 186 pp. (I).

Set in a western mining town at the end of the gold rush era, Angelena befriends An Li despite the racism and fear that surround the community. The tauntings, threats, beatings, and even murders that the Celestials (Chinese immigrants) endured at the hands of U.S. miners speak volumes about the prevalence of prejudice during these times. Because of her friendship with An Li, Angelena learns about the Chinese culture. Despite the tension that erupts, An Li and Angelena remain fast friends until the day An Li leaves with her family to work on the railroads on the Columbia River. This moving book provides a glimpse into

the lives of the Chinese immigrants who worked in the mines and on the railroads and who had a significant impact on our American way of life. (YSR)

- 16.30 ★ Hoobler, Dorothy, and Thomas Hoobler. **The Ghost in the Tokaido Inn**. Philomel, 1999. ISBN 0-399-23330-X. 224 pp. (I).

In eighteenth-century Japan, Judge Ooka was known for his ability to solve crimes through careful reasoning. In this novel, the Hooblers have taken the tender leaves of this history and brewed a complex tale of samurai suspense. Their story's protagonist is Seiki, a fourteen-year-old merchant's son, who longs to rise above his class to samurai status. He has his chance when he witnesses the theft of a valuable gift to the shogun, and with Judge Ooka's assistance he follows the path of the crime to its thrilling conclusion. Like the tea that Seiki drinks, the novel is smooth and full of subtle flavors, with fascinating insights into the place of duty, honor, and respect in shogun-era Japan. (SAW)

- 16.31 ★ Park, Linda Sue. **A Single Shard**. Clarion, 2001. ISBN 0-395-97827-0. 152 pp. (I).

As the first Asian American to win the Newbery Medal, Linda Sue Park delivers a fascinating story of early Korea. The young protagonist, Tree Ear, is an orphan apprenticed to Min, the village's master potter. Tree Ear volunteers to travel to faraway Songdo to deliver two of Min's superb vases to an important emissary. Along the way, he is robbed by thieves, who hurl the vases from a cliff. Tree Ear considers making the same leap in shame but instead retrieves a single shard from one of the vases and continues to Songdo. Rather than reject the shard, the emissary sees the quality of the work: "Radiance of jade and clarity of water"—that is what is said about the finest celadon glaze. . . . I say it of this one" (p. 138). Like celadon, Park's prose shows clarity and craft, and her helpful author's note, which explores the history of celadon pottery as well as shares insights into twelfth-century life in Korea, enhances the tale. (SAW)

- 16.32 ★ White, Ellen Emerson. **The Royal Diaries: Kaiulani, the People's Princess**. Scholastic, 2001. ISBN 0-439-12909-5. 238 pp. (I).

In this well-researched book written in diary form, White has captured the life events as well as the moods and feelings of Princess Kaiulani. White's expert use of Hawaiian words

throughout this story lends authenticity to the text and teaches readers something about the Hawaiian language, and students will learn a lot about the history of the Hawaiian Islands. At the end of the book, the author provides a family tree of the Kalákaua family, with pictures as well as information about the Hawaiian language. This book is a must-read for anyone studying the history of the Hawaiian Islands. (YSR)

- 16.33 ★ Yin. *Coolies*. Illustrated by Chris Soentpiet. Philomel, 2001. ISBN 0-399-23227-3. Unpaged. (ALL).

In this stunning book, Yin takes a deprecatory term—coolies—and transforms it into a celebration of the heroic contributions of Chinese Americans in building the transcontinental railroad. The central tale is of two brothers, Shek and Little Wong, who leave China and are hired by Central Pacific to help build the western half of the U.S. railroad. Their tribulations are intense, though Shek and Wong remain determined to stay together. Soentpiet's double-page spreads are dazzling. Illustrations of the United States like Soentpiet's are all too rare because, in actuality, when the railroad was completed, everyone was invited to the celebration except the coolies. In Soentpiet's illustration, the brothers are pictured standing in the back of the crowd. Shek comments: "Call us what you will, it is our hands that helped build the railroad." Through Yin's and Soentpiet's capable hands, readers develop a more accurate and personal portrayal of the early history of multicultural America. (SAW)

Navigating Cultures in Modern Times

- 16.34 ★ Na, An. *A Step from Heaven*. Front Street, 2001. ISBN 1-886910-58-8. 176 pp. (I).

The winner of the 2002 Michael L. Printz Award for Excellence in Young Adult Literature, this poignant narrative details the life of Young Ju from her immigration to the United States from Korea at the age of four until she begins college. In her youth, Young Ju believes that the United States is heaven. Her uncle explains that while the United States is not paradise, perhaps it is just a step away. But the journey Young Ju and her family have to travel makes it clear that the distance is far wider. Faced with language difficulties and crushing poverty, Young Ju's family struggles to survive. Her father loses the battle and becomes an alcoholic

whose violence erupts against his wife and children until a climactic scene in which Young Ju calls the police. This stunning first novel from Korean-born An Na is sure to grip the minds and hearts of intermediate readers if they have a teacher courageous enough to discuss a world that is far more than a step away from heaven. (SAW)

- 16.35 ★ Yep, Laurence. **The Amah**. Putnam, 1999. ISBN 0-399-23040-8. 181 pp. (I).

Yep has once again captured the experiences of Chinese American children born to immigrant parents. Jealousy and anger are emotions Amy Chin frequently feels when her mother becomes an amah (a Chinese nanny) to Miss Stephanie, the daughter of a wealthy widower. Though Amy's life has not been easy since the death of her father, she now has to take on many added responsibilities that she dislikes. Then, because Mr. Sinclair, Stephanie's father, works long hours, Stephanie moves in with the Chin family and sleeps in Amy's bed. This realistic novel shows the tension among the family members in both households and how they cope with this most difficult situation. In the end, Mrs. Chin and Mr. Sinclair learn about their daughters, while Amy and Stephanie better understand their parents and each other and thus are able to forge a new relationship. (YSR)

- 16.36 ★ Yep, Laurence. **Dream Soul**. HarperCollins, 2000. ISBN 0-06-028390-4. 245 pp. (I).

Yep's continuing story of the Lee family tells of their first Christmas in West Virginia. The only thing the three Lee children want for Christmas is to be allowed to celebrate it. When Miss Lucy, the family's landlady, invites them to celebrate Christmas with her, Mr. and Mrs. Lee initially resist. After much cajoling, the parents agree, but only if the children are good all the time. Each day brings new temptations for the Lee children, who get caught in one of their naughty adventures. Joan, the eldest, befriends glamorous Victoria Barrington. How Joan wishes she were Victoria and had a father like Mr. Barrington! A crisis forces Joan to gain new understanding of her parents, her heritage, and what parental love is all about. Chinese American children will be able to see themselves in this realistic book and appreciate the hardships immigrant Chinese parents endure to make a better life for their children. (YSR)

Growing Up and Coming of Age

- 16.37 ★ Germain, Kerry. **Surf's Up for Kimo.** Illustrated by Keoni Montes. Island Paradise, 2000. ISBN 0-9705889-0-9. Unpaged. (P).

Kimo wants to surf, but first he has to become a strong swimmer and learn how the waves break on the shore. One day Kimo's mother tells him about the first wave she caught. That night Kimo dreams about gliding across the waves. The next morning Kimo awakes and runs to the beach. He paddles the old surfboard hard, but the waves are rough, his arms ache, and he keeps missing the waves. Then Kimo hears another surfer say, "Hey, kid, that one's got your name on it." Kimo remembers his mother's words and soon he is riding the waves just like his brothers. Beautifully illustrated by Hawaiian artist Keoni Montes, this book is a feast for the eyes. The bold, vibrant illustrations provide information about Hawaii's native plants and animals, and at the end of the book a glossary of terms describes the various plants that adorn the bottom of each page. (YSR)

- 16.38 Salisbury, Graham. **Lord of the Deep.** Delacorte, 2001. ISBN 0-385-72918-9. 182 pp. (I).

Mikey is a thirteen-year-old deckhand who works with his stepdad Bill on his charter boat, the *Crystal-C*, off the Kona coast on the big island of Hawaii. When Bill takes Mikey with him on a charter, Mikey finds himself in a difficult situation. Mikey wonders how Bill could demean himself for the charter and must deal with his conflicting feelings toward himself and Bill. Should he approach Bill, and if he does, what should he say? Finally, when Mikey has the courage to approach Bill, his response is not what Mikey expects. In a fit of emotion, Mikey jumps off the *Crystal-C*. Swimming back to shore, he feels restless and empty. As he thinks about other charters, Mikey realizes that not all of them have been like this one, not even once. With this realization, Mikey is flooded with understanding and calls out to Bill, "I'll be there to clean up when you get in, okay?" (YSR)