

Multicultural Fiction and Biographies for Teens

Afghanistan

Khaled Hosseini [The Kite Runner](#). 2003

Amir is the son of a prominent and wealthy man, while Hassan, the son of Amir's father's servant, is a Hazara—a shunned ethnic minority. Their intertwined lives, and their fates, reflect the eventual tragedy of the world around them. When Amir and his father flee the country for a new life in California, Amir thinks that he has escaped his past, only to find that he cannot leave the memory of Hassan behind him.

Staples, Suzanne Fisher. [Under the Persimmon Tree](#). 2005

During the 2001 Afghan War, the lives of Najmal, a young refugee from Afghanistan, and Nusrat, an American-Muslim teacher who is awaiting her husband's return from Mazar-i-Sharif, intersect at a school in Peshawar, Pakistan.

Stine, Catherine [Refugees](#). 2005

Following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, Dawn, a 16 year old runaway from San Francisco, connects by phone and email with Johar, a gentle, 15 year old Afghani who assists Dawn's foster mother, a doctor, at a Red Cross refugee camp in Peshawar.

Africa

Stratton, Allan [Chanda's Secrets](#). 2004

A girl's struggle amid the African AIDS pandemic, Chanda, is an astonishingly perceptive girl living in the small city of Bonang, a fictional city in Southern Africa. When her youngest sister dies, the first hint of HIV/AIDS emerges, Chanda must confront undercurrents of shame and stigma.

Stratton, Allan [Chanda's Wars](#). 2008

Chandra Kabelo, a teenaged African girl, must save her younger siblings after they are kidnapped and forced to serve as child soldiers in General Mandiki's rebel army.

African American

Anderson, Laurie Halse [Chains](#). 2008

After being sold to a cruel couple in New York City, a slave named Isabel spies for the rebels during the Revolutionary War.

Anderson, M.T. [The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing, Traitor to the Nation](#). 2006

Various diaries, letters, and other manuscripts chronicle the experiences of Octavian, a young African American, from birth to age sixteen, as he is brought up as part of a science experiment in the years leading up to and during the Revolutionary War.

Lester, Julius [Guardian](#). 2008

In a rural southern town in 1946, a white man and his son witness the lynching of an innocent black man. Includes historical note on lynching.

Nolan, Han [A Summer of Kings](#). 2006

Over the course of the summer of 1963, 14 year old Esther Young discovers the passion within her when 18 year old King-Roy Johnson, accused of murdering a white man in Alabama, comes to live with her family.

Cambodian American

Crew, Linda. [Children of the River](#). 1989

Having fled Cambodia four years earlier to escape the Khmer Rouge army, 17 year old Sundara is torn between remaining faithful to her own people and enjoying life in her Oregon high school as a "regular" American.

China

Compestine, Ying Chang [Revolution is Not a Dinner Party](#). 2007

Starting in 1972 when she is nine years old, Ling, the daughter of two doctors, struggles to make sense of the communists' Cultural Revolution, which empties stores of food, homes of appliances deemed "bourgeois," and people of laughter.

Namioka, Lensey Ties That Bind, Ties That Break. 1999

Ailin's life takes a different turn when she defies the traditions of upper class Chinese society by refusing to have her feet bound.

Chinese American

Yep, Laurence. Dragonwings. 1975

In the early twentieth century a young Chinese boy joins his father in San Francisco and helps him realize his dream of making a flying machine.

France

Mosher, Richard Zazoo. 2001

Amid old secrets revealed and rifts healed, a 13 year old **Vietnamese** orphan raised in rural France by her aging "Grand-Pierre" learns about life, death, and love.

Hispanic American

Anaya, Rudolfo Bless Me, Ultima. 1972

Antonio faces the daunting prospect of growing up amidst constant religious & cultural uncertainty. His mother is a devoted Catholic, but her influence is challenged by Ultima - a curandera, one who cures with herbs & magic. As he follows his own path toward adulthood, Antonio relies on Ultima's wisdom.

Cisneros, Sandra The House on Mango Street. 1991

Esperanza is a young girl growing up in the Latino section of Chicago. Esperanza doesn't want to belong - not to her rundown neighborhood, and not to the low expectations the world has for her.

Soto, Gary Taking Sides. 1991

14 year old Lincoln Mendoza, an aspiring basketball player, must come to terms with his divided loyalties when he moves from the Hispanic inner city to a white suburban neighborhood.

India

McCormick, Patricia Sold. 2006

Thirteen-year-old Lakshmi, though poor, enjoys her life until the Himalayan monsoons wash away her family's crops and she is sold to a brothel in India by her stepfather. She remembers her mother's wisdom, "Simply to endure is to triumph," until the day comes that she can reclaim her life.

Michaelis, Antonia Tiger Moon. (translated from German) 2008

Sold to be the 8th wife of a rich & cruel merchant, Safia, also called Raka, tries to escape her fate by telling stories of Farhad the thief, his companion Nitish the white tiger, & their travels across India to retrieve a famous jewel that will save a kidnapped princess from becoming the bride of a demon king.

Venkatraman, Padma Climbing the Stairs. 2008

In India, in 1941, when her father becomes brain-damaged in a non-violent protest march, 15 year old Vidya and her family are forced to move in with her father's extended family and become accustomed to a totally different way of life.

Whelan, Gloria Homeless Bird. 2000

When 13 year old Koly enters into an ill-fated arranged marriage, she must either suffer a destiny dictated by India's tradition or find the courage to oppose it.

Iran (Persia)

Sayres, Meghan Nuttall Anahita's Woven Riddle. 2006

In Iran, more than 100 years ago, a young girl with three suitors gets permission from her father and a holy man to weave into her wedding rug a riddle to be solved by her future husband, which will ensure that he has wit to match hers.

Iraq

Myers, Walter Dean Sunrise Over Fallujah. 2008

Robin Perry, from Harlem, is sent to Iraq in 2003 as a member of the Civilian Affairs Battalion, and his time there profoundly changes him.

Ireland

Dowd, Siobhan Bog Child. 2008

In 1981, the height of Ireland's "Troubles," 18 year old Fergus is distracted from his upcoming A-level exams by his imprisoned brother's hunger strike, the stress of being a courier for Sinn Fein, and dreams of a murdered girl whose body he discovered in a bog.

Israel

Banks, Lynne Reid One More River. 1973

Resentful at being forced to leave **Canada**, Lesley's adjustment to life in the Israeli kibbutz is not easy.

Kass, Pnina Moed Real Time. 2004

Sixteen-year-old Tomas Wanninger persuades his mother to let him leave **Germany** to volunteer at a kibbutz in Israel, where he experiences a violent political attack and finds answers about his own past.

Japan

Paterson, Katherine The Master Puppeteer. 1975

A 13 year old boy describes the poverty and discontent of 18th century Osaka and the world of puppeteers in which he lives.

Watkins, Yoko Kawashima My brother, my sister, and I. 1994

Sequel to: So Far From the Bamboo Grove. Living as refugees in Japan in 1947 while trying to locate their missing father, 13 year old Yoko & her older brother & sister must endure a bad fire, injury, & false charges of arson, theft, & murder.

Korea

Kim, Helen S. The Long Season of Rain. 1996

When an orphan boy comes to live with her family, 11 year old Junehee begins to realize that the demands placed on Korean women can destroy their lives.

Native American

Alexie, Sherman The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian. 2007

Budding cartoonist Junior leaves his troubled school on the Spokane Indian Reservation to attend an all-white farm town school where the only other Indian is the school mascot.

Bruchac, Joseph Code Talker: A Novel About the Navajo Marines of World War Two. 2005

After being taught in a boarding school run by whites that Navajo is a useless language, Ned Begay and other Navajo men are recruited by the Marines to become Code Talkers, sending messages during World War II in their native tongue.

Smelcer, John The Trap. 2006

In alternating chapters, 17 year old Johnny Least-Weasel, who is better known for brains than brawn, worries about his missing grandfather, and the grandfather, Albert Least-Weasel, struggles to survive, caught in his own steel trap in the Alaskan winter.

Vietnam

Sherry Garland Song of the Buffalo Boy. 1994

Shunned and mistreated because of her mixed heritage, and determined to avoid an arranged marriage, 17 year old Loi runs away to Ho Chi Minh City with the hope that she and the boy she loves will be able to go to the United States to find her American father.

Biographies

American Shaolin Flying Kicks, Buddhist Monks, and the Legend of Iron Crotch: An Odyssey in the New China, Matthew Polly. 2007

Marc Chagall, Howard Greenfield. 1967

A biography of the Russian-born painter famous for his dream-like paintings, use of brilliant colors, and his creation of the stained glass Jerusalem Windows for a synagogue.

Childhood, Patrick Chamoiseau ; translated by Carol Volk. 1999

Chamoiseau recalls the brilliant, magical universe of his early childhood growing up in a rich Creole culture in Martinique.

The Life and Death of Crazy Horse, Russell Freedman. 1996

A biography of the Oglala leader who relentlessly resisted the white man's attempt to take over Indian lands.

Ella Fitzgerald: Jazz Singer Supreme, Carolyn Wyman. 1993

Chronicles the life & singing career of Fitzgerald & discusses her impact on contemporary music.

Mohandas Gandhi, Glenn Alan Cheney. 1983

Describes briefly the colonial India into which Gandhi was born, his upbringing and education, including his stay in South Africa, and the nonviolent revolution he led to free India from English rule.

Young, Black, & Determined: A Biography of Lorraine Hansberry, Patricia C. McKissack. 1998

A biography of the black playwright who received great recognition for her work at an early age.

Frida Kahlo: Portrait of a Mexican Painter, Cruz, Barbara C. 1996

A biography of the Mexican woman painter discussing her work and its international reputation, her political ties, and her relationship with the muralist Diego Rivera.

Chinese Cinderella: The True Story of an Unwanted Daughter, Adeline Yen Mah. 1999

Adeline is 3 days old when her mother dies. Blamed for the death and considered bad luck, for years she tries to please her family, wanting only acceptance and love, but often facing rejection. Finally, after discovering literature, she is given the chance to succeed.

The Poet Slave of Cuba: A Biography of Juan Francisco Manzano, Engle, Margarita. 2006

Born in 1797 into the household of wealthy slaveowners in Cuba, Manzano spent his early years at the side of his owner's wife, entertaining her friends. His poetry was his outlet, reflecting the beauty and cruelty of his world. Written in verse.

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