

PACIFIC ASIAN AMERICAN AND CANADIAN

CULTURAL LITERACY

Asians and Pacific Islanders have enriched the history of North America for over 200 years.

Through the cane fields of Hawaii to the building of the railroad in the America West to the goldmines of British Columbia and California to the canneries of Alaska, Pacific Islanders and Asians struggled to establish themselves here. More recently, younger generations of Pacific Islanders and Asian Americans and Canadians have written books, produced films, and developed sites for sharing the story of growing up in North America. These generous efforts make this cultural literacy guide possible.

This resource describes eighteen books, four films on video and CD, and three sites that represent much of the experience of Asians and Pacific Islanders in North America.

The Pacific Asian American/Canadian Christian Education Ministries Board sought to list a variety of resources in a limited space. We narrowed our selection to the essential resources that are contemporary, available across much of Canada and the United States, and appropriate for both youth and adults. This is the second edition of a guide to the cultural literacy. The board welcomes your comments. For more information about the board and this project, please see page six.

**A CULTURAL LITERACY GUIDE PRODUCED BY PACIFIC ASIAN
AMERICAN/CANADIAN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION MINISTRIES**

[Books]

Becoming Asian American: Second Generation Chinese and Korean American Identities

By Nazli Kibria

2003. Paper. 232 pp. Johns Hopkins University Press.

Drawing upon extensive interviews with second-generation Chinese and Korean American young adults, the author explores dynamics of race, identity, and adaptation. Her insights into the changes in perception experienced by these young adults in their college years mirror what congregations observe in the young adult populations: a struggle to engage with other cultures because they don't know yet who they are or want to be. The book covers issues such as the model minority, children and intermarriage, consequences of being Asian, new immigrant and integration, etc.

People on the Way

Asian North Americans Discovering Christ, Culture, and Community

Edited by David Ng

1996. Paper. 300pp. Judson Press

This valuable resource shares the experiences of Asian North American Christians as they claim their identity and are shaped by their rich Asian religious and cultural heritage. Contributors to the book are North Americans whose cultural heritages represent East Asian cultures: Chinese, Japanese and Korean. Various Asian religious perspectives are brought into dialogue with the Christian faith in the belief that the church today, including its Asian North American congregations, can benefit from a dialogue between culture and faith.

American Eyes: New Asian-American Short Stories for Young Adults

Edited by Lori M. Carlson

1999. Paper. 160pp. Rebound by Sagebrush

American Eyes is a collection of ten short stories written from a young adult perspective on the conflicting struggles of race, identity, and family within a first generation to second generation immigrant setting. Intended for ages 12 and up, the variety of the stories, both of race and theme, provides a diverse view into the never ending search for an identity that has yet to be defined. Cynthia Kadohata writes in her introduction to this anthology, "There is no subject that is off-limits for an Asian writer, just as there is no subject that is off-limits to a writer of any race." With no restrictive theme or tone for the collection, each writer expresses an individual personality captured in the honest and frank writing of the stories.

When the Emperor Was Divine

By Julie Otsuka

2003. Paper. 160pp. Anchor Books.

This moving story recounts the internment experience of a Japanese-American family in the early 1940's. The points of view of each of the four family members reveal the emotional texture of their experience. Although written for older children, all readers will gain insight into this shameful episode in the history of the United States. Reading the book raises issues of family and community relationships in a time of struggle for security and identity - a theme still appropriate in today's culture of fear perpetrated by 9/11.

Watermark: Vietnamese American Poetry & Prose

Edited by: Barbara Tran, Monique T.D. Truong & Luu Truong Khoi (Ed.)
1998. Paper. 227pp. Temple University Press.

Watermark depicts stories, histories, family lives and cultural settings of Vietnamese-American immigrants who experienced the mixed feelings between the past and the present, the unfamiliar lifestyles of America and the haunted memories of Vietnam War era. Each contributing writer in *Watermark* tells the stories vividly and compels any reader to read the whole book in one breath. The "heart" and "soul" of *Watermark's* theme is the heart of life in America and the soul of the longing feelings for the old days "back home" and will bring tears to every reader's eyes.

Yell-Oh Girls!

Edited by: Vickie Nam
2001. Paper. 336pp. Harper Paperbacks.

Yell-Oh Girls! is a collection of poetry, short essays, and personal testimonies from Asian-American young women from the ages of 14-22. The theme of an emerging identity of blurred cultural boundaries and the empowerment of young Asian-American females is infused within all perspectives as a variety of Asian ethnicities and cultural situations are represented while continuing a feeling of solidarity. Not only will Asian-American females feel they are reading their own biographies, but *Yell-Oh Girls!* portrays a reliable representation for insight into the constant struggle between two cultures and search for compatibility and union between them.

Still Life with Rice

By Helie Lee
1996. Paper. 320pp. Touchstone Simon & Shuster.

Lee, a Korean-American, writes a beautiful story of her grandmother's life being born and raised in Korea, enduring the Japanese occupation, the Korean war, and eventually immigrating to the United States. Lee begins the novel as herself, talking with her grandmother, then takes on her grandmother's voice telling her remarkable story of strength and courage. Powerfully written, the biographical work illustrates the delicate work of forging an identity as a Korean-American woman.

American Dragons: Twenty-five Asian American Voices

By by Laurence Yep & Kam Mak

1995. Paper. 256pp. Harper Trophy.

Lawrence Yep, a Chinese-American writer well known for his children's books, brings together twenty-five short stories, poems, and monologues focused on life as Asian Americans. While the collection is dominated by Chinese and Japanese writers, there are also several pieces from Korean, Vietnamese, Thai, as well as Tibetan perspective. Even though the writing quality is uneven, this collection does give some insight into the lives of Asian Americans growing up in the U.S. Identity, heritage, issues of privacy and abuse are just some of the topics covered. Chosen carefully, some of these stories can be used to provide a starting point for Asian American youths to talk about their struggles and reveal the hurts that are not easily understood. This collection can also provide illumination for those who are interested in working with Asian-American youths and dealing with bicultural issues.

Being Japanese American

By Gil Asakawa

2004. Paper. 160 pp. Stone Bridge Press. \$14.95

This book is a “sourcebook” for Nikkei, Hapas, and their friends, as they trace the early history of Japanese people in North America from immigration to discrimination and internment, then reparations and intermarriage. It looks at the cultural and spiritual roots of the Japanese Americans and how they have been adapted in the new life in North America. Also included are interviews with Japanese Americans on what they remember growing up as Japanese Americans and how it impacts their lives today.

A Step from Heaven

By An Na

2003. Paper. 160pp. Puffin.

A Step from Heaven is a fictional young adult novel based on autobiographical memories from author, An Na, but with fictional character personalities. The main character, Young Ju, begins as a four-year old who immigrates to America with her parents from a small village in Korea and continues until college age. Young Ju struggles not only with cultural issues, but author An Na provides a story surrounding the family troubles the stress of immigrating and financial hardships may cause. Well written and in the perspective of a memoir, *A Step from Heaven* also shows the impossible situation many Asian-American children find themselves in as they are forced to both assimilate and become “more American” in school and continue to hold onto being “more Asian” at home.

Children of the River

By Linda Crew

1991. Paper. 224pp. Laurel Leaf.

Children of the River is a fictional children's novel, suggested for ages 12+ or grades 7-10, based on historical realities during the Communist Khmer Rouge attack upon Cambodia. The story follows a young teenage girl's escape from Cambodia to Oregon and her family's struggles to create a life in America. The main character, Sundara, faces not only financial hardships, but cultural conflicts as her Khmer identity and her emerging American identity clash with no compromise. This book challenges readers to widen their perspective on racism and opens eyes to the priorities of love for those you care for over tradition and cultural restrictions.

Cultural Tug of War

By Young Lee Hertig

2002. Paper. 288pp. Abingdon Press.

Deeply moving stories help the reader grasp the complexity of issues among Korean immigrant families. The author addresses the desire of new immigrants to maintain their home culture, family clashes as children adapt, shock of discovering that the culture back home has changed while the immigrant was away, and the strength required to bridge emotional, family, and cultural barriers. The title of this accessible book captures the theme of the issues of Korean-Americans.

The Opposite of Fate: A Book of Musings

By Amy Tan

2003. Paper. 416pp. Putnam Adult

Novelist Amy Tan began her musings by asking how hope changes according to life's circumstances. "And what," she continues, "of the circumstances themselves: Do we believe they are simply a matter of fate? Or do we view them as the Chinese concept of luck, the Christian concept of God's will, the American concept of choice? And depending on what we believe, how can we then find balance in our lives? What do we accept? What do we feel we can still change?" In these ruminations, the author of *Joy Luck Club* finds answers and lessons in everyday actions and attitudes.

Daruma Days

By Terry Watada

1997. Paper. 206pp. Ronsdale Press

Set in the internment camps of the British Columbia interior during World War II, Terry Watada's *Daruma Days* captures the Japanese Canadian experience of imprisonment. Watada draws on the accounts of people who lived through the camps, often speaking with the voices of the *issei* and *nisei*, to portray the camps as haunted by demonic forces, the inhabitants caught between two worlds: the cultures of Japan and Canada. With his use of Japanese folklore, ghost stories and legends, Watada presents a collection of

astonishing experiences: a mirror that reveals a murdered picture bride turned prostitute, fireballs that strike the wicked, the chaos of the uprooting itself, as thousands of people were forcibly moved to the wilderness. Watada has himself conducted many interviews with camp internees (including his parents), and he now discloses the heretofore unmentioned gangsterism and scandals among the Japanese Canadians themselves — an eye-opener for most readers who have never been permitted this unusual viewpoint. With its controversial materials, *Daruma Days* alters our understanding of the internment camps forever.

Midnight At the Dragon Café

By Judy Fong Bates

2005. Paper. 317pp. Counterpoint Press

In this deeply affecting debut novel by the author of the short story collection *China Dog*, intrepid Su-Jen Chou, the only daughter of parents who flee Communist China in the 1950s to become proprietors of a Chinese restaurant in an isolated Ontario town, watches as her family unravels. In Irvine, it is "so quiet you can hear the dead," and Su-Jen's mother, Jing, beautiful and bitter, laments her imprisonment in an unfamiliar country. To Jing's chagrin, Su-Jen's father, Hing-Wun, much older than his wife, believes in the traditional method for obtaining wealth: endless hard work. When Su-Jen's handsome older half-brother, Lee-Kung, comes to live with the family and help out in the restaurant, Su-Jen is happy, but soon she notices her mother and Lee-Kung exchanging veiled glances and realizes they're keeping some dangerous secret. Increasingly, Su-Jen finds herself caught between her parents, who have "settled into an uneasy and distant relationship... their love, their tenderness, they give to their daughter." She seeks relief in books and in the Chinese tales her father loves to tell, but the trouble festering comes to a head when a mail-order bride arrives for her brother. Bates conveys with pathos and generosity the anger, disappointment, vulnerability and pride of people struggling to balance duty and passion.

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Good Luck Life: The Essential Guide to Chinese American Celebrations and Culture

By Rosemary Gong

2005. Paper. 288pp. Collins

Good Luck Life is an excellent guide to Chinese American celebrations and culture. The book explains the Chinese calendar, the annual Chinese holidays and special occasions covering weddings, births, significant birthdays and funerals. It is full of facts, legends, foods, old village recipes and advice on when and how to plan for these celebrations. This book will help the younger generations learn about their Chinese heritage. In the church setting *Good Luck Life* would be a good reference book to help understand the rituals, beliefs and superstitious that many non-Christian and Christian Chinese follow.

Seven Card Stud with Seven Manangs Wild: An Anthology of Filipino-American writings

Edited by Helen C. Toribio, Evangeline C. Buell, Liz Megino and Terry Bautista
2002. Paper. 270pp. T'Boli Publishing & Distributor

These stories represent memories of growing up in different regions of the United States from urban jungle of Manhattan to the dusty farmlands and cities of California and represent different generations, ranging from survivors of the Great Depression in the 1930s to immigrants from the 1980s, escapees of an ancestral homeland in economic and political turmoil. In prose and in poetry, they share the world they grew up with two cultures and multiple languages. A Filipino-American Timeline helps to provide historical background and understanding of the Filipino-Americans in the United States. These memoirs help us to realize that we share the same world of two cultures and multiple languages.

Growing Up Filipino: Stories for Young Adults

By Cecilia Manguerra Brainard
2003. Paper. 284pp. PALH.

These 29 short stories offer a highly textured portrait of Filipino youth. Stories are arranged thematically, and each story is introduced by a thumbnail sketch of the author and a paragraph or two about some element of Filipino culture or history that is relevant to the story. Tough but relevant topics addressed include a gay youth's affection for his supportive mother, the role of religious didacticism in the formation of a childhood perception, consumer culture as it is experienced by modern teens in Manila, and coping with bullies of all ages and stations of life. The stories collectively capture the natural and social tapestry of the Philippines and Filipino culture and those forces that influence it. There are more Filipinos living in the United States than most people realize. This collection of stories is reflective of their experiences and the complexities of modern Filipino culture.

[Films]

Snow Falling on Cedars

Universal Studios. Directed by Scott Hicks. Written by David Guterson. Rated PG-13.
127 minutes. Color

Snow Falling on Cedars is the adaptation of David Guterson's best selling novel also titled *Snow Falling on Cedars*. A beautiful film incorporating peaceful scenes of loving and reverential images of nature, the film is a passionate, dynamic thriller and drama about the horrors of racial prejudice, set in Washington State after World War II. The plot is set around a trial of Kazuo Miyamoto, accused for the murder of Carl Heine, a local fisherman. The trial frames the story of a local news reporter and the community as levels of racial tension in San Piedro is high since many of the Japanese have returned from their internment camps and are tempting to begin their lives anew despite prejudice and ignorance caused by the war. Love is also present in this passionate film, as the news reporter becomes reacquainted with the wife of Kazuo Miyamoto, who was a childhood friend and past lover despite the opposing views of their parents. *Snow Falling on Cedars*

addresses many issues of racial prejudice, love, war, and justice. Beautifully done, this film was unsurprisingly nominated for an Oscar and has won numerous additional awards and nominations.

The Grace Lee Project (Independent Film/Documentary)

A LeeLee Films Production. Produced and directed by Grace Lee. 68 minutes.

Website: <http://www.gracelee.net>

The Grace Lee Project is both a highly entertaining and socially educating film on Asian-American identity struggles and the impact of both anonymity and stereotypical pressures based on ethnicity. The film is comprised of a series of interviews with a variety of Grace Lees and friends of "Grace Lee". Filmmaker Grace Lee commented on her intentions with the film, "The more I heard about these other Grace Lees, the more I became convinced that 'Gace Lee' signified an unmemorable, conservative hyper-achiever, confirming already existing stereotypes of Asian Americans. I secretly feared that my name alone lumped me together with people I felt I had nothing in common with-- After years of hearing about my alter egos, I had to find out if my fears were founded in reality." To view the trailer for the film, or to obtain the film, contact through <http://www.gracelee.net> is available.

In the Shadow of Gold Mountain

A National Film Board of Canada Production. Directed by Karen Cho. Produced by Tamara Lynch. 43 minutes and 4 seconds.

Karen Cho, a fifth-generation Canadian of mixed heritage, discovered that half her family wasn't welcome in the country they called home. While Canada encouraged and rewarded immigration from Europe, it imposed laws that singled out the Chinese as unwanted and unwelcome. Cho's film takes her from Montreal to Vancouver to uncover stories from the last living survivors of the Chinese Head Tax and Exclusion Act. This dark chapter in our history, from 1885 until 1947, plunged the Chinese community in Canada into decades of debt and family separation. At the centre of the film are personal accounts of extraordinary Chinese Canadians who survived an era that threatened to eradicate their entire community. Through a rich melding of history, poetry and raw emotion, this documentary sheds light on an era that shaped the identity of generations, with deeply moving testimonials, it reveals the profound ways this history still casts its shadow. This film can be purchased through the National Film Board, www.NFB.CA with \$29.95 for DVD or VHS.

The Joy Luck Club

Hollywood Pictures. Produced by Oliver Stone and Janet Yang. Directed by Wayne Wang. 139 minutes. Color.

Based upon the novel by Amy Tan (Tan wrote the screenplay with Ronald Bass), this movie follows the lives of four remarkable Chinese American women from their upbringing in China to their immigration to the United States and their raising daughters of their own. The story focuses on the relationships between these women and each of their daughters and the journey of one daughter back to China to meet her two long lost

sisters. Beautiful and moving, the film also highlights Chinese and American cultural differences with insight and levity.

[Sites to Visit]

Dr. Sun Yat Sen Classical Chinese Garden

578 Carrall Street
Vancouver, British Columbia
V6B 5K2
Phone: (604) 662-3207
Fax: (604) 682-4008

www.vancouverchinesegarden.com

Built in 1986 for the Vancouver World Exposition, the Dr. Sun Yat Sen Classical Chinese Garden is the only classical garden outside of China. The garden offers free guided tours daily led by docents. As you tour the garden, the docents will also provide information about the history of Chinese in Canada. The garden also features several exhibits throughout the year of works by Chinese Canadian artisans.

Hours: Spring (May 1-June 14): 10:00 AM - 6:00 PM

Summer (June 15- August 31): 9:30 AM - 7:00 PM

Fall (September 1-30): 10:00 AM - 6:00 PM

Winter (October 1-April 30): 10:00 AM - 4:30 PM

Admission: Adults CAD \$7.50

Seniors/students CAD \$6.00

Children under 5 are free.

Angel Island State Park

Tiburon, CA 94920
General Information: (415) 435-3972
Fax: (415) 435-2950

<http://www.angelisland.org>

Informally known as the “Ellis Island of the West,” Angel Island immigration station, located on a 750-acre island in the San Francisco Bay, processed over 50,000 Chinese immigrants between 1920 and 1943. The original immigration station buildings are still standing. Visitors may read the carvings of names and poetry left behind by the many who were held on the island in some cases for months.

Picnicing, hiking, camping are popular activities on the island. Ferry service runs from San Francisco, Tiburon, Vallejo, and Oakland/Alameda. The Angel Island Association is a non-profit organization of volunteers who provide interpretive tours of the immigration facilities. Call (415) 435-3522 to arrange a tour.

Hours: Angel Island is open from 8:00am to sunset year around. Ferry schedules and fees vary. Please call the general information line for more information.

Japanese American National Museum

369 East First Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Phone: (213) 625-0414

Fax: (213) 625-1770

<http://www.janm.org>

The Japanese American National Museum is the first museum in North America dedicated to sharing the experience of Americans of Japanese ancestry. Presenting a comprehensive collection of Japanese American objects, images and documents and a multi-faceted program of exhibitions, educational programs, films and publications, the Museum tells the story of Japanese Americans around the United States.

Hours: Tuesday through Sunday 10:00 AM - 5:00 PM

Thursday 10:00 AM - 8:00 PM

Final visitor admissions take place thirty minutes before closing.

Closed Mondays, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day.

Admission: Adults \$8.00

Seniors (62 and over) \$5.00

Students (with ID) and Children (6-17) \$4.00

Children 5 and under and museum members, Free

Free general admission: every Thursday from 5 to 8 pm and every third

Thursday of the month.

Museum business hours are Tuesday through Friday from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM.

In 1978 twenty-three people concerned about Asian American Christian education gathered in California for conversation and dreaming together. Their dreams and hopes gave birth to what we now know as Pacific Asian American/Canadian Christian Education Ministries (PAACCE). Today, PAACCE involves eight denominations in the United States and Canada in a board that meets biannually.

PAACCE is proud to be responsible for a remarkable list of achievements over the past twenty-five plus years. Their efforts impact denominational programs, strengthen local congregations, and equip youth leaders, teachers, and pastors. Our accomplishments include:

- Youth leadership training events
- Writers' conferences
- Youth resource manual
- Asian worship resource

Today PAACCE continues to be a primary provider of Christian education resources for Pacific Asian American and Canadian churches.

PAACCE is committed to the development of challenging and practical programs to meet the needs of first, second, and third generation Asian congregations.

PAACCE Ministries is a program ministry of the Education and Leadership Ministries Commission of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (NCC).

Member communions participating in PAACCE include:

- American Baptist Churches, USA
- The Episcopal Church
- Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
- Presbyterian Church (USA)
- Reformed Church in America
- United Church of Canada
- United Church of Christ
- United Methodist Church

PAACCE Ministries is governed by a board composed of representatives from each of the member communions and the NCC.

Copies of this resource are free to participating communions. The board members welcome your comments. For more information about PAACCE Ministries, please contact the Education and Leadership Ministries Commission of the NCC.

Guide editor: David Chai
Assisting editor: Heeja Han
Artwork/ Layout: Trevor Kai

General Information:

PAACCE Ministries

Education and Leadership Ministries Commission

475 Riverside Drive, 8th Floor

New York, NY 10115-0050

212-870-2297

gpierce@nccusa.org

www.nccusa.org/about/education

