

# Multicultural Books for Young Adults

Listed below are books that have multicultural characters or themes, including cultures outside the United States or representing a minority group within the United States. Both historical fiction and contemporary realistic fiction are included. A few books are non-fiction. These books vary in the difficulty of both the text and the content. Not all books are appropriate for all readers. (Annotations from Library of Congress).

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

Alvarez, Julia. *Before We Were Free*. In the early 1960s in the Dominican Republic, twelve-year-old Anita learns that her family is involved in the underground movement to end the bloody rule of the dictator, General Trujillo.

Anderson, M.T. *The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing: Traitor to the Nation: Vol. 1: The Pox Party*. Various diaries, letters, and other manuscripts chronicle the experiences of Octavian, a young African American, as he is brought up as part of a science experiment in the years leading up to and during the Revolutionary War.

Armstrong, Jennifer, ed. *Shattered: Stories of Children and War*.

Boas, Jacob. *We are Witnesses: Five Diaries of Teenagers Who Died in the Holocaust*. Non-fiction.

Braff, Joshua. *The Unthinkable Thoughts of Jacob Green*. Jacob Green, a young Jewish boy growing up in 1970s suburban New Jersey, struggles to deal with his fear of disappointing and yearning to escape the demands and expectations of his tyrannical and narcissistic father, Abram.

Bray, Libba. *I Have Lived a Thousand Years*. The author describes her experiences during World War II when she and her family were sent to the Nazi death camp at Auschwitz. Non-fiction.

Bredsdorff, Bodil. *The Crow-Girl*. After the death of her grandmother, a young orphaned girl leaves her house by the cove and begins a journey which leads her to people and experiences that exemplify the wisdom her grandmother had shared with her.

Bridges, Ruby. *Through My Eyes*. Ruby Bridges recounts the story of her involvement, as a six-year-old, in the integration of her school in New Orleans in 1960.

Bruchac, Joseph. *Code Talker*. 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.

Bruchac, Joseph. *Whisper in the Dark*. An ancient and terrifying Narragansett native-American legend begins to come true for a teenage long-distance runner, whose recovery from the accident that killed her parents has stunned everyone, including her guardian aunt in Providence, Rhode Island.

Buckhanon, Kalisha. **Upstate**. In jail after being charged with his father's murder, seventeen-year-old Antonio finds his love with sixteen-year-old Natasha tested and engages in a ten-year correspondence with her from behind bars.

Cameron, Ann. **Colibrí**. Kidnapped when she was very young by an unscrupulous man who has forced her to lie and beg to get money, a twelve-year-old Mayan girl endures an abusive life, always wishing she could return to the parents she can hardly remember.

Carvell, Marlene. **Sweetgrass Basket**. In alternating passages, two Mohawk sisters describe their lives at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, established in 1879 to educate Native Americans, as they try to assimilate into white culture and one of them is falsely accused of stealing.

Chotjewitz, David. **Daniel Half-Human and the Good Nazi**. In 1933, best friends Daniel and Armin admire Hitler, but as anti-Semitism buoys Hitler to power, Daniel learns he is half Jewish, threatening the friendship even as life in their beloved Hamburg, Germany, is becoming nightmarish.

Cisneros, Sandra. **The House on Mango Street**.

Clinton, Cathryn. **A Stone in My Hand**. Living in Gaza City in the late 1980's, eleven-year-old Malaak and her family are touched by the increasing violence between Israelis and Palestinians when first her father disappears and then her older brother is drawn to the Islamic Jihad.

Cofer, Judith Ortiz. **The Meaning of Consuelo**.

Crowe, Chris. **Getting Away with Murder: The True Story of the Emmett Till Case**. Presents a true account of the murder of fourteen-year-old, Emmett Till, in Mississippi, in 1955. Nonfiction.

Crutcher, Chris. **Whale Talk**. Intellectually and athletically gifted, TJ, a multiracial, adopted teenager, shuns organized sports and the gung-ho athletes at his high school until he agrees to form a swimming team and recruits some of the school's less popular students.

Curtis, Christopher Paul. **Bucking the Sarge**. Deeply involved in his cold and manipulative mother's shady business dealings in Flint, Michigan, fourteen-year-old Luther keeps a sense of humor while running the Happy Neighbor Group Home For Men, all the while dreaming of going to college and becoming a philosopher.

Curtis, Christopher Paul. **Bud, Not Buddy**. Ten-year-old Bud, a motherless boy living in Flint, Michigan, during the Great Depression, escapes a bad foster home and sets out in search of the man he believes to be his father--the renowned bandleader, H.E. Calloway of Grand Rapids.

Curtis, Christopher Paul. **The Watsons Go to Birmingham - 1963**. The ordinary interactions and everyday routines of the Watsons, an African American family living in Flint, Michigan, are drastically changed after they go to visit Grandma in Alabama in the summer of 1963.

Cushman, Karen. **Rodzina**. A twelve-year-old Polish American girl is boarded onto an orphan train in Chicago with fears about traveling to the West and a life of unpaid slavery.

D'Adamo, Francesco. **Iqbal**. A fictionalized account of the Pakistani child who escaped from bondage in a carpet factory and went on to help liberate other children like him before being gunned down at the age of thirteen.

Danticat, Edwidge. ***The Farming of Bones***. In 1937, on the Dominican side of the Haitian border, Amabelle, an orphaned maid to an army colonel's wife, falls in love with Sebastien, an itinerant sugarcane cutter, but their relationship is threatened by the violent persecution of the Haitians.

Dole, Mayra Lazara. ***Down to the bone***. Laura is thrown out of her house when her mother discovers she is a lesbian, but after trying to change her heart and hide from the truth, Laura finally comes to terms with who she is and learns to love and respect herself.

Dorris, Michael. ***A Yellow Raft in Blue Water***.

Dorris, Michael. ***Morning Girl***. Morning Girl, who loves the day, and her younger brother Star Boy, who loves the night, take turns describing their life on an island in pre-Columbian America; in Morning Girl's last narrative, she witnesses the arrival of the first Europeans to her world.

Draper, Sharon. ***Copper Sun***. Two fifteen-year-old girls--one a slave and the other an indentured servant--escape their Carolina plantation and try to make their way to Fort Moses, Florida, a Spanish colony that gives sanctuary to slaves.

Ellis, Deborah. ***The Breadwinner***. Because the Taliban rulers of Kabul, Afghanistan, impose strict limitations on women's freedom and behavior, eleven-year-old Parvana must disguise herself as a boy so that her family can survive after her father's arrest.

Flake, Sharon. ***The Skin I'm In***. Thirteen-year-old Maleeka, uncomfortable because her skin is extremely dark, meets a new teacher with a birthmark on her face and makes some discoveries about how to love who she is and what she looks like.

Freedman, Russell. ***The Voice that Challenged a Nation: Marian Anderson and the Struggle for Equal Rights***. Nonfiction.

Frost, Helen. ***Keesha's House***. Seven teens facing such problems as pregnancy, closeted homosexuality, and abuse each describe in poetic forms what caused them to leave home and where they found home again.

Glatstein, Jacob. ***Emil and Karl***. In Vienna, Austria, in 1940, two nine-year-old boys, one Jewish and one Aryan, are classmates and best friends when events of the Nazi occupation draw them even closer together as they fight to survive and escape together.

Grimes, Nikki. ***Dark Sons***. Alternating poems compare and contrast the conflicted feelings of Ishmael, son of the Biblical patriarch Abraham, and Sam, a teenager in New York City, as they try to come to terms with being abandoned by their fathers and with the love they feel for their younger stepbrothers.

Hesse, Karen. ***Aleutian Sparrow***. An Aleutian Islander recounts her suffering during World War II in American internment camps designed to "protect" the population from the invading Japanese.

Hesse, Karen. ***Witness***. A series of poems express the views of various people in a small Vermont town, including a young black girl and a young Jewish girl, during the early 1920s when the Ku Klux Klan is trying to infiltrate the town.

Holt, Kimberly Willis. ***Keeper of the Night***. Thirteen-year-old Isabel, a girl living on the island of Guam, and her family try to cope with the suicide of Isabel's mother.

Hosseini, Khalid. ***The Kite Runner***.

Hosseini, Khalid. ***A Thousand Splendid Suns***. Mariam and her mother live an isolated existence on the outskirts of a small town in Afghanistan because Mariam is the illegitimate daughter of the town's richest man. When her mother dies, fifteen-year-old Mariam is betrothed to a cobbler in the faraway city of Kabul. After several years of a childless marriage, Mariam's husband marries a second wife, a girl whose boyfriend has fled to the refugee camps in Pakistan.

Houston, Julian. ***New Boy***. As a new sophomore at an exclusive boarding school, a young black man is witness to the persecution of another student with bad acne who is also Jewish.

Jansen, Hanna. ***Over a Thousand Hills I Walk with You***. Jeanne and her family, who are Tutsis living in Rwanda during a time of civil war, flee their home in hopes of evading Hutu soldiers as political events threaten to overtake them.

Kass, Pnina Moed. ***Real Time***. 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.

Kadohata, Cynthia. ***Kira-Kira***. Chronicles the close friendship between two Japanese-American sisters growing up in rural Georgia during the late 1950s and early 1960s, and the despair when one sister becomes terminally ill.

Khadra, Yasmina. ***The Swallows of Kabul***.

Kingsolver, Barbara. ***The Bean Trees***.

Kushner, Tony, reteller. ***Brundibar***. (picture book)

Lasky, Kathryn. ***Broken Song***. In 1897, fifteen-year-old Reuven Bloom, a Russian Jew, must set aside his dreams of playing the violin in order to save himself and his baby sister after the rest of their family is murdered.

Latifa. ***My Forbidden Face: Growing Up Under the Taliban: A Young Woman's Story***. Nonfiction.

Lester, Julius. ***Day of Tears***. When gambling debts and greed enter into the Butler household, Pierce Butler decides to host the biggest slave auction in American history and breaks a promise by selling Emma, his most-valued slave and caretaker of his children--a decision that brings about unthinkable consequences.

Lobel, Anita. ***No Pretty Pictures: A Child of War***. The author, known as an illustrator of children's books, describes her experiences as a Polish Jew during World War II and for years in Sweden afterwards. Nonfiction.

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

Martel, Yann. ***Life of Pi***. "After the tragic sinking of a cargo ship in the Pacific, one solitary lifeboat remains, carrying a hyena, a zebra, a female orangutan, a Bengal tiger, and a 16-year-old Indian boy names Pi. His story is a dazzling work of imagination that will delight and astound listeners in equal measure. It is a triumph of storytelling and a tale that will as one character puts it, make you believe in God"--Container.

Mazer, Norma Fox. ***Good Night, Maman***. After spending years fleeing from the Nazis in war-torn Europe, twelve-year-old Karin Levi and her older brother Marc find a new home in a refugee camp in Oswego, New York.

McCormick, Patricia. ***Sold***. When she is tricked by her stepfather and sold into prostitution, thirteen-year-old Lakshmi becomes submerged in a nightmare where her only comfort is the friendship she forms with the other girls, which helps her survive and eventually escape.

Mori, Kyoko. ***Shizuko's Daughter***. After her mother's suicide when she is twelve years old, Yuki spends years living with her distant father and his resentful new wife, cut off from her mother's family, and relying on her own inner strength to cope with the tragedy.

Morrison, Toni. ***The Bluest Eye***.

Moses, Shelia P. ***The Legend of Buddy Bush***. In 1947, twelve-year-old Pattie Mae is sustained by her dreams of escaping Rich Square, North Carolina, and moving to Harlem when her Uncle Buddy is arrested for attempted rape of a white woman and her grandfather is diagnosed with a terminal brain tumor.

Myers, Walter Dean. ***Autobiography of My Dead Brother***. Jesse pours his heart and soul into his sketchbook to make sense of life in his troubled Harlem neighborhood and the loss of a close friend.

Myers, Walter Dean. ***Shooter***. Written in the form of interviews, reports, and journal entries, the story of three troubled teenagers ends in a tragic school shooting.

Myers, Walter Dean. ***The Glory Field***. Follows a family's two hundred forty-one year history, from the capture of an African boy in the 1750s through the lives of his descendants, as their dreams and circumstances lead them away from and back to the small plot of land in South Carolina that they call the Glory Field.

Na, An. ***Wait for Me***. Mina yearns to find her own path in life but working at the family business, taking care of her little sister, and dealing with her mother's expectations are as stifling as the southern California heat, until she falls in love with a man who offers a way out.

Napoli, Donna Jo. ***Bound***. In a novel based on Chinese Cinderella tales, fourteen-year-old stepchild Xing-Xing endures a life of neglect and servitude, as her stepmother cruelly mutilates her own child's feet so that she alone might marry well.

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

Park, Linda Sue. ***A Single Shard***. Tree-ear, a thirteen-year-old orphan in medieval Korea, lives under a bridge in a potters' village, and longs to learn how to throw the delicate celadon ceramics himself.

Paterson, Katherine. ***Jip: His Story***. While living on a Vermont poor farm during 1855 and 1856, Jip learns his identity and that of his mother and comes to understand how he arrived at this place.

Paulsen, Gary. ***Nightjohn***. Twelve-year-old Sarny's brutal life as a slave becomes even more dangerous when a newly arrived slave offers to teach her how to read.

Peck, Richard. ***The River Between Us***. During the early days of the Civil War, the Pruitt family takes in two mysterious young ladies who have fled New Orleans to come north to Illinois.

Rappaport, Doreen. ***Free at Last! Stories and Songs of Emancipation***. Describes the experiences of African Americans in the South, from the Emancipation in 1863 to the 1954 Supreme Court decision that declared school segregation illegal. Nonfiction.

Ryan, Pam Muñoz. ***Becoming Naomi León***. When Naomi's absent mother resurfaces to claim her, Naomi runs away to Mexico with her great-grandmother and younger brother in search of her father.

Ryan, Pam Muñoz. ***Esperanza Rising***. Esperanza and her mother are forced to leave their life of wealth and privilege in Mexico to go work in the labor camps of Southern California, where they must adapt to the harsh circumstances facing Mexican farm workers on the eve of the Great Depression.

Sáenz, Benjamin Alire. ***Sammy and Juliana in Hollywood***. As a Chicano boy living in the unglamorous town of Hollywood, New Mexico, and a member of the graduating class of 1969, Sammy Santos faces the challenges of "gringo" racism, unpopular dress codes, the Vietnam War, barrio violence, and poverty.

Satrapi, Marjane. ***Persepolis*** and ***Persepolis II***

Schmidt, Gary D. ***Lizzie Bright and the Buckminster Boy***. In 1911, Turner Buckminster hates his new home of Phippsburg, Maine, but things improve when he meets Lizzie Bright Griffin, a girl from a poor, nearby island community founded by former slaves that the town fathers--and Turner's--want to change into a tourist spot.

Smelcer, John. ***The Trap***. In alternating chapters, seventeen-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.

Soto, Gary. ***The Afterlife***. A senior at East Fresno High School lives on as a ghost after his brutal murder in the restroom of a club where he had gone to dance. A fantasy.

Spinelli, Jerry. ***Milkweed***.

Stolz, Joelle. ***The Shadows of Ghadames***. At the end of the nineteenth century in Libya, eleven-year-old Malika simultaneously enjoys and feels constricted by the narrow world of women, but an injured stranger enters her home and disrupts the traditional order of things.

Straight, Susan. ***A Million Nightingales***. When she is sold away from her family, Moinette begins to prepare herself for an escape to freedom, journeying through a world of brutality, sexual violence, loss, and struggle to find her way out of the bonds of slavery.

Stratton, Allan. ***Borderline***. Despite the strained relationship between them, teenaged Sami Sabiri risks his life to uncover the truth when his father is implicated in a terrorist plot.

Stratton, Allan, ***Chanda's Secrets***.

Taylor, Peter Lane. ***The secret of Priest's Grotto : a Holocaust survival story***. Recounts the story of several Jewish families forced to hide in a Ukrainian cave system to escape Nazi persecution. Includes photographs, chronology and interviews with survivors and their family members.

Volponi, Paul. ***Black and White***. Two star high school basketball players, one black and one white, experience the justice system differently after committing a crime together and getting caught.

Volponi, Paul. ***Rooftop***. Still reeling from seeing police shoot his unarmed cousin to death on the roof of a New York City housing project, seventeen-year-old Clay is dragged into the whirlwind of political manipulation that follows.

Warren, Andrea. ***Surviving Hitler: A Boy in the Nazi Death Camps***.

Wiesel, Elie. ***Night***. An autobiographical narrative, in which the author describes his experiences in Nazi concentration camps.

Williams-Garcia, Rita. ***Every Time a Rainbow Dies***. After seeing a girl raped and becoming obsessed with her, sixteen-year-old Thulani finds motivation to move beyond his interest in his pigeons and his grief over his mother's death.

Williams-Garcia, Rita. ***No Laughter Here***. In Queens, New York, ten-year-old Akilah is determined to find out why her closest friend, Victoria, is silent and withdrawn after returning from a trip to her homeland, Nigeria.

Woodson, Jacqueline. ***Behind You***. After fifteen-year-old Jeremiah is mistakenly shot by police, the people who love him struggle to cope with their loss as they recall his life and death, unaware that 'Miah is watching over them.

Woodson, Jacqueline. ***Feathers***. When a new, white student nicknamed "The Jesus Boy" joins her sixth grade class in the winter of 1971, Frannie's growing friendship with him makes her start to see some things in a new light.

Woodson, Jacqueline. ***If You Come Softly***. After meeting at their private school in New York, fifteen-year-old Jeremiah, who is black and whose parents are separated, and Ellie, who is white and whose mother has twice abandoned her, fall in love and then try to cope with people's reactions.

Woodson, Jacqueline. ***Locomotion***. In a series of poems, eleven-year-old Lonnie writes about his life, after the death of his parents, separated from his younger sister, living in a foster home, and finding his poetic voice at school.

Yep, Laurence. ***Dragon's Gate***. When he accidentally kills a Manchu, a fifteen-year-old Chinese boy is sent to America to join his father, an uncle, and other Chinese working to build a tunnel for the transcontinental railroad through the Sierra Nevada mountains in 1867. Sequel to "Mountain light."

Yep, Laurence. ***The Traitor***.

Zoya. ***Zoya's Story : an Afghan woman's battle for freedom***.

List compiled by Diane Linenbroker

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