**Hey, That Happened to Me!**

**Culturally Relevant Literature for Adolescent ELs**

Ada, A. F., & Thompson, K. D. (1993). *My name is María Isabel* (1st ed.). New York: Aladdin Paperbacks.

Third grader María Isabel, born in Puerto Rico and now living in the U.S., wants badly to fit in at school; and the teacher's writing assignment "My Greatest Wish" gives her that opportunity.

Altman, L. J., & Sanchez, E. O. (1993). *Amelia's road = El camino de Amelia* (1st ed.). New York: Lee & Low Books.

Tired of moving around so much, Amelia, the daughter of migrant farm workers, dreams of a stable home.

Alvarez, J. (2002). *Before we were free* (1st ed.). New York: A. Knopf.

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.

Alvarez, J. (2009). *Return to sender* (1st ed.). New York: Knopf.

After his family hires migrant Mexican workers to help save their Vermont farm from foreclosure, eleven-year-old Tyler befriends the oldest daughter, but when he discovers they may not be in the country legally, he realizes that real friendship knows no borders.

Argueta, J., & Gómez, E. (2001). *A movie in my pillow: Poems = Una pelicula en mi almohada: Poemas*. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

Poems in Spanish and in English communicate the poet's memories of being a boy in El Salvador and in San Francisco.

Bernardo, A. (1996). *Fitting in*. Houston, TX: Piñata Books.

A collection of stories about young girls who as Cuban immigrants to the United States grow in confidence and spirit as they confront painful challenges, meeting them head-on.

Bernardo, A. (1998). *Loves me, loves me not*. Houston, TX: Piñata Books.

While trying to win the attention of a high school basketball star who already has a girlfriend, Maggie, a Cuban American, learns painful lessons about romantic young love.

Budhos, M. T. (2006). *Ask me no questions* (1st ed.). New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers.

Fourteen-year-old Nadira, her sister, and their parents leave Bangladesh for New York City, but the expiration of their visas and the events of September 11, 2001, bring frustration, sorrow, and terror for the whole family.

Budhos, M. T. (2010). *Tell us we're home* (1st ed.). New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers.

Three immigrant girls from different parts of the world meet and become close friends in a small New Jersey town where their mothers have found domestic work, but their relationships are tested when one girl's mother is accused of stealing a precious heirloom.

Buss, F. L., & Cubias, D. (1991). *Journey of the sparrows* (1st ed.). New York: Lodestar Books.

Maria and her brother and sister, Salvadoran refugees, are smuggled into the United States in crates and try to eke out a living in Chicago with the help of a sympathetic family.

Canales, V. (2005). *The tequila worm*. New York: Wendy Lamb Books.

Sofia grows up in the close-knit community of the barrio in McAllen, Texas, then finds that her experiences as a scholarship student at an Episcopal boarding school in Austin only strengthen her ties to family and her "comadres."

Castilla, J. M. (1999). *Emilio*. Houston, TX: Piñata Books.

A young immigrant from Central America finds it difficult to learn English and adjust to life in the big city of Houston, Texas.

Castilla, J. M. (2009). *Strange parents*. Houston, Tex.: Pinata Books.

Having spent most of her life living with her grandmother in Mexico, thirteen-year-old Marisol reluctantly travels to Fort Worth, Texas, to be reunited with parents she has not seen in ten years and a brother she has never met.

Cha, D., Cha, C., Cha, N. T., & Minnesota Humanities Commission. (2002). *Dia's story cloth = Diav daim paj ntaub dab neeg = Dlav dlaim paaj ntaub lug nruag* (Bilingual ed.). St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Humanities Commission.

The story cloth made for her by her aunt and uncle chronicles the life of the author and her family in their native Laos and their eventual emigration to the United States.

Cofer, J. O. (1996). Beauty lessons. In *An island like you: Stories of the barrio* (pp. 41-54). New York: Puffin Books.

Twelve stories about young people caught between their Puerto Rican heritage and their American surroundings.

Cofer, J. O. (1996). *An island like you: Stories of the barrio*. New York: Puffin Books.

Twelve stories about young people caught between their Puerto Rican heritage and their American surroundings.

Cofer, J. O. (2004). *Call me Maria: A novel* (1st ed.). New York: Orchard Books.

Fifteen-year-old Maria leaves her mother and their Puerto Rican home to live in the barrio of New York with her father, feeling torn between the two cultures in which she has been raised.

Danticat, E. (2001). *The butterfly's way: Voices from the Haitian dyaspora [sic] in the United States*. New York: Soho Press.

This complilation of essays and poetry brings together Haitian-Americans of different generations and backtrounds, linking the voices of those for whom English is a first language and others whose thoughts and dreams will always be formed in French and Kreyol.

Danticat, E. (2002). *Behind the mountains* (1st ed.). New York: Orchard Books.

Writing in the notebook which her teacher gave her, thirteen-year-old Celiane describes life with her mother and brother in Haiti as well as her experiences in Brooklyn after the family finally immigrates there to be reunited with her father.

De la Cruz, M. (2005). *Fresh off the boat* (1st ed.). New York: HarperCollins.

When her family emigrates from the Philippines to San Francisco, California, fourteen-year-old Vicenza Arambullo struggles to fit in at her exclusive, all-girl private school.

Desai Hidier, T. (2002). *Born confused* (1st ed.). New York: Scholastic Press.

Seventeen-year-old Dimple, whose family is from India, discovers that she is not Indian enough for the Indians and not American enough for the Americans, as she sees her hypnotically beautiful, manipulative best friend taking possession of both her heritage and the boy she likes.

English, K., & Sanchez, E. O. (2000). *Speak English for us, Marisol!* Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman.

Marisol, who is bilingual, is sometimes overwhelmed when her Spanish-speaking family members and neighbors need her to translate for them.

Gallo, D. R. (2004). *First crossing: Stories about teen immigrants* (1st ed.). Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press.

Stories of recent Mexican, Venezuelan, Kazakh, Chinese, Romanian, Palestinian, Swedish, Korean, Haitian, and Cambodian immigrants reveal what it is like to face prejudice, language barriers, and homesickness along with common teenage feelings and needs.

Herrera, J. F., & Robledo Tapia, H. (2003). *Super cilantro girl = La superniña del cilantro*. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

Eight-year-old Esmeralda is transformed into a superhero and flies off to rescue her mother, who visited Mexico without her green-card and is not being permitted to return to the United States.

Ho, M. (2003). *The stone goddess* (1st ed.). New York: Orchard Books.

After the Communists take over Cambodia and her family is torn from their city life, twelve-year-old Nakri and her older sister attempt to maintain their hope as well as their classical dancing skills in the midst of their struggle to survive.

Jaramillo, A. (2006). *La línea* (1st ed.). New Milford, CT: Roaring Brook Press.

When fifteen-year-old Miguel's time finally comes to leave his poor Mexican village, cross the border illegally, and join his parents in California, his younger sister's determination to join him soon imperils them both.

Jiménez, F. (1997). *The circuit: Stories from the life of a migrant child = Cajas de cartón* (1st ed.). Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press.

The story begins in Mexico when the author is very young and his parents inform him that they are going on a very long trip to "El Norte." What follows is a series of stories of the family's unending migration from one farm to another as they search for the next harvesting job.

Jiménez, F. (2001). *Breaking through = Senderos fronterizos: Continuación de Cajas de cartón*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Having come from Mexico to California ten years ago, fourteen-year-old Francisco is still working in the fields but fighting to improve his life and complete his education.

Jiménez, F. (2008). *Reaching out = Más allá de mí*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Leaving his home in a migrant community, Francisco sets off for college, carrying memories of years of poverty and prejudice.

Johnston, T. (2001). *Any small goodness: A novel of the barrio*. New York: Blue Sky Press.

Arturo and his family and friends share all kinds of experiences living in the barrio of East Los Angeles--reclaiming their names, playing basketball, championing the school librarian, and even starting their own gang.

Karim, S. (2009). *Skunk girl* (1st ed.). New York: Farrar Straus Giroux

Nina Khan is not just the only Asian or Muslim student in her small-town high school in upstate New York, she is also faces the legacy of her "Supernerd" older sister, body hair, and the pain of having a crush when her parents forbid her to date.

Lai, T. (2011). *Inside out & back again* (1st ed.). New York: Harper.

Through a series of poems, a young girl chronicles the life-changing year of 1975, when she, her mother, and her brothers leave Vietnam and resettle in Alabama.

Lee, M. G. (1992). *Finding my voice*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

As she tries to enjoy her senior year and choose which college she will attend, Korean American Ellen Sung must deal with the prejudice of some of her classmates and pressure from her parents to get good grades.

Lee, M. G. (1994). *Saying goodbye*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

In this sequel to "Finding My Voice," Ellen Sung explores her interest in creative writing and in her Korean heritage during her freshman year at Harvard.

Lee, M. G. (1996). *Necessary roughness* (1st ed.). New York: HarperCollins.

Sixteen-year-old Korean American Chan moves from Los Angeles to a small town in Minnesota, where he must cope not only with racism on the football team but also with the tensions in his relationship with his strict father.

Levine, E., & Björkman, S. (1989). *I hate English!* New York: Scholastic Inc.

When her family moves to New York from Hong Kong, Mei Mei finds it difficult to adjust to school and learn the alien sounds of English.

We can understand the underlying reasons an immigrant youth might seem unwilling to speak in English or participate in class. This shows us the complex struggle many L2 learners have about their home language, their identity, and the fear of making mistakes in English.

Lord, B. (1984). *In the year of the boar and Jackie Robinson* (1st ed.). New York: Harper & Row.

In 1947, a Chinese child comes to Brooklyn where she becomes Americanized at school, in her apartment building, and by her love for baseball.

This book draws the connection between the civil rights movement and immigration and shows the beauty in the opportunities of America. Shiley Temple Wong finds herself in predicaments that are common to the immigrant experience and often humorous and sad at the same time. Other immigrants will be able to relate to her experiences and the rest of us will learn what it is like to live in two worlds.

Mak, K. (2002). *My Chinatown: One year in poems* (1st ed.). New York: HarperCollins.

A boy adjusts to life away from his home in Hong Kong in the Chinatown of his new American city.

The poems are divided into the four seasons which are described through the lens of Chinese culture in America.

McCall, G. G. (2011). *Under the mesquite* (1st ed.). New York: Lee & Low Books.

Throughout her high school years, as her mother battles cancer, Lupita takes on more responsibility for her house and seven younger siblings, while finding refuge in acting and writing poetry. Includes glossary of Spanish terms.

Medina, J., & Vanden Broeck, F. (1999). *My name is Jorge on both sides of the river: Poems* (1st ed.). Honesdale, PA: Wordsong/Boyds Mills Press.

A collection of 27 insightful poems that give the migrant experience from the point of view of a grade school child from Mexico.

Mobin-Uddin, A., & Kiwak, B. (2005). *My name is Bilal* (1st ed.). Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mills Press.

When Bilal and his sister transfer to a school where they are the only Muslims, they must learn how to fit in while staying true to their beliefs and heritage.

Na, A. (2001). *A step from heaven* (1st ed.). Asheville, NC: Front Street.

A young Korean girl and her family find it difficult to learn English and adjust to life in America.

The story is presented in short vingettes that start in Korea and continue for about 15 years when she graduates high school in America. It is very sad to see the negative effects of diplacement take ahold of her family yet she overcomes through education.

Na, A. (2006). *Wait for me*. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons.

As her senior year in high school approaches, 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 impossible expectations are as stifling as the southern California heat, until she falls in love with a man who offers a way out.

Namioka, L. (2006). *Mismatch*. New York: Delacorte Press.

Their families clash when a Japanese-American teenaged boy starts dating a Chinese-American teenaged girl.

Nye, N. S. (1997). *Habibi* (1st ed.). New York: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers.

When fourteen-year-old Liyanne Abboud, her younger brother, and her parents move from St. Louis to a new home between Jerusalem and the Palestinian village where her father was born, they face many changes and must deal with the tensions between Jews and Palestinians.

Osa, N. (2003). *Cuba 15*. New York: Delacorte Press.

Violet Paz, a Chicago high school student, reluctantly prepares for her upcoming "quince," a Spanish nickname for the celebration of an Hispanic girl's fifteenth birthday.

Pérez, A. I., & Gonzalez, M. C. (2002). *My diary from here to there = Mi diario de aquí hasta allá*. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

A young girl describes her feelings when her father decides to leave their home in Mexico to look for work in the United States.

Perkins, M. (2005). *The not-so-star-spangled life of Sunita Sen: A novel* (2nd ed.). New York: Little Brown.

When her grandparents come for a visit from India to California, thirteen-year-old Sunita finds herself resenting her Indian heritage and embarrassed by the differences she feels between herself and her friends.

Ramos, J., & Cordero, K. (2005). *Dying to cross: The worst immigrant tragedy in American history*. Carmel, CA: Hampton-Brown.

Through interviews with survivors who had the courage to share their stories and conversations with the victims' families, and in examining the political implications of the incident for both U.S. and Mexican immigration policies, Jorge Ramos tells the story of one of the most heartbreaking episodes of our nation's turbulent history of immigration.

Ryan, P. M. (2000). *Esperanza rising* (1st ed.). New York: Scholastic Press.

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.

Shea, P. D. (2003). *Tangled threads: A Hmong girl's story*. New York: Clarion Books.

After ten years in a refugee camp in Thailand, thirteen-year-old Mai Yang travels to Providence, Rhode Island, where her Americanized cousins introduce her to pizza, shopping, and beer, while her grandmother and new friends keep her connected to her Hmong heritage.

Veciana-Suarez, A. (2002). *Flight to freedom* (1st ed.). New York: Orchard Books.

Writing in the diary which her father gave her, thirteen-year-old Yara describes life with her family in Havana, Cuba, in 1967 as well as her experiences in Miami, Florida, after immigrating there to be reunited with some relatives while leaving others behind.

Villaseñor, V., & González, A. (2007). *¡Macho!* Houston, TX.: Arte Publico Press.

Macho details seventeen-year-old Roberto Garcia’s journey from the state of Michoacán, Mexico, to his illegal entry into the United States. His backbreaking work in the vegetable fields of California and the workers’ divided sentiments over César Chavez’s efforts to unionize the workers are chronicled in a style that many critics have compared to the best of John Steinbeck.

Yang, D. J. (2000). *The secret voice of Gina Zhang* (1st ed.). Middleton, WI: American Girl.

When her extreme shyness makes her unable to speak at her new American school, twelve-year-old Jinna, newly arrived from China, retreats into her own fairy tale world.