

Immigration Fiction for Elementary and Junior High School Teachers

The short synopses provided below have been adapted from Scholastic.com and the Grand Rapids Public Library online encyclopedia as well as other sources. This list is by no means exhaustive. We look forward to adding your suggestions!

Applegate, Katherine (2007). *Home of the Brave*.

Synopsis: Kek, an African refugee, is confronted by many strange things at the Minneapolis home of his aunt and cousin, as well as in his fifth grade classroom, and longs for his missing mother, but finds comfort in the company of a cow and her owner.

Avi (2003). *Silent Movie*.

Synopsis: In the early years of the twentieth century, a Swedish family encounters separation and other hardships upon immigrating to New York City until the son is cast in a silent movie.

Brown, Jackie (2004). *Little Cricket*.

Synopsis: After the upheaval of the Vietnam War reaches them, twelve-year-old Kia and her Hmong family flee from the mountains of Laos to a refugee camp in Thailand and eventually to the alien world of Saint Paul, Minnesota.

Bunting, Eve (2000). *Dreaming of America: An Ellis Island Story*.

Synopsis: A young girl journeys from Ireland to America with her two younger brothers becoming the first immigrant into Ellis Island.

_____ (1999). *A Picnic in October*.

Synopsis: An Italian-American boy finally comes to understand why his grandmother insists that the family come to Ellis Island each year to celebrate Lady Liberty's birthday.

Campbell Bartoletti, Susan (2000). *A Coal Miner's Bride: The Diary of Anetka Kaminska, Lattimen, Pennsylvania, 1896*.

Synopsis: Spirited Anetka is only 13 when she leaves her Poland home for Pennsylvania mine country and a husband she's never met. Watch Anetka adapt to her strange new life, finding joy even under desperate circumstances.

Cheng, Andrea (2004). *The Honeysuckle House*.

Synopsis: An all-American girl with Chinese ancestors and a new immigrant from China find little in common when they meet in their 4th-grade class, but they are both missing their best friends and soon discover other connections.

Danticat, Edwidge (2002). *Behind the Mountains*.

Synopsis: Writing in the notebook her teacher gave her, 13-year-old Celiane describes life with her mother and brother in Haiti as well as her experiences in Brooklyn after the family immigrates there to be reunited with her father.

Durbin, William (2000). *The Journal of Otto Peltonen*.

Synopsis: Otto Peltonen's journal documents his daily descent down a Minnesota mine. He essentially gives his life to the Iron Mining Company in pursuit of his family's dream for their own farm. The fictionalized journal includes historical notes and photographs that ground Otto's journal in reality.

Figueredo, D.H. (1999). *When this World Was New*.

Synopsis: When his father leads him on a magical trip of discovery through new fallen snow, a young boy who emigrated from his warm island home overcomes fears about living in New York.

Galarza, Ernesto (1991). *Barrio Boy*.

Synopsis: In this memoir, Galarza tells the story of his life from his early experiences in Jalcoctán, a small village in Mexico, to his move to the barrio in Sacramento, California, in the wake of the Mexican Revolution. Before leaving for the United States, Galarza and his family move from their village to a nearby city in search of safety from the escalation of the Revolution. Here his family struggles to look for a job, provide him with an education, and keep the family intact in a war-torn country. Once in the United States, young Galarza and his family have to adjust to the life in the new country and deal with new experiences and influences that would forever change him.

Giff, Patricia Reilly (2003). *Maggie's Door*.

Synopsis: In the mid-1800s, Nory and her neighbor and friend, Sean, set out separately on a dangerous journey from famine-plagued Ireland, hoping to reach a better life in America.

Glaser, Linda. 2005. *Bridge to America*.

Synopsis: Eight-year-old Fivel narrates the story of his family's Atlantic Ocean crossing to the United States, from its desperate beginning in a shtetl in Poland in 1920 to his stirrings of identity as an American boy.

Grant, Karima (2006). *Sofie and the City*.

Synopsis: When Sofie calls her grandmother in Senegal on Sundays, she complains about the ugliness of the city she now lives in, but her life changes when she makes a new friend.

Gundisch, Karin (2001). *How I Became an American*.

Synopsis: In 1902, ten-year-old Johann and his family, Germans who had been living in Austria-Hungary, board a ship to immigrate to Youngstown, Ohio, where they make a new life as Americans.

Hazen, Barbara Shook (2003). *Katie's Wish*.

Synopsis: Soon after Katie wishes for her potatoes to disappear during dinner, the potato famine of the 1840s ravages her native Ireland, forcing her to leave for America.

Heller, Linda (2007). *The Castle on Hester Street*.

Synopsis: Julie's grandmother deflates many of her husband's tall tales about their journey from Russia to America and their life on Hester Street.

Hest, Amy (1997). *When Jessie Came Across the Sea*.

Synopsis: Thirteen-year-old Jessie journeys from a poor village in Eastern Europe to New York City at the turn of the century.

Himmelblau, Linda (2005). *The Trouble Begins*.

Synopsis: Reunited with his family for the first time since he was a baby, fifth grader Du struggles to adapt to his new home in the United States.

Hoffman, Mary (2002). *The Color of Home*.

Synopsis: Hassan, newly-arrived in the United States and feeling homesick, paints a picture at school that shows his old home in Somalia as well as the reason his family had to leave.

Kuklin, Susan (1992). *How My Family Lives in America*.

Synopsis: A glimpse at how three recent immigrant families impart a sense of ethnic identity to their children.

Kurtz, Jane (2005). *In the Small, Small Night*.

Synopsis: Kofi can't sleep in his new home in the United States, so his older sister Abena soothes his fears about life in a different country by telling him two folktales from their native Ghana about the nature of wisdom and perseverance.

Lasky, Kathryn (1998). *Dreams in the Golden Country*.

Synopsis: New dreams and old traditions flourish and clash when a Jewish girl and her family emigrate from Russia to America.

Lawlor, Veronica (1995). *I Was Dreaming to Come to America: Memories from the Ellis Island Oral History Project*.

Synopsis: In 15 excerpts, young immigrants from various ethnic backgrounds recount their reasons for coming to America and describe their feelings about leaving their country.

Levine, Ellen (1989). *I Hate English!*

Synopsis: Mei Mei, a bright and articulate immigrant from Hong Kong, overcomes her difficulty adjusting to the new language and culture at school in New York City through the help of her teacher.

_____ (1993). *If Your Name Was Changed at Ellis Island*.

Synopsis: This unique, interactive history book encourages readers to step into the past guided by a question-and-answer format in full color. It's also packed with quotes from children and adults who passed through Ellis Island.

Lee, Milly (2006). *Landed*.

Synopsis: After leaving his village in southeastern China in 1915, twelve-year-old Sun is held at Angel Island, San Francisco, before being released to join his father, a merchant living in the area.

Lombard, Jenny (2006). *Drita, My Homegirl*

Synopsis: When Drita and her family, refugees from Kosovo, move to New York, Drita is teased about not speaking English well, but after a popular student is forced to learn about Kosovo as a punishment, the girls soon bond.

Lord, Bette (1984). *In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson*.

Synopsis: Set in 1947, Chinese-American Shirley Temple Wong becomes a part of her new American surroundings.

Maestro, Betsy (1999). *Coming to America: The Story of Immigration*.

Synopsis: A succinct history of U.S. immigration for students of all levels, this expressive book captures the joy and anxiety of the successive waves of immigrants looking for a better life.

Mak, Kam (2002). *My Chinatown: One Year in Poems*.

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

Moss, Marissa (2000). *Hannah's Journal: The Story of an Immigrant Girl*.

Synopsis: In the Russian shtetl where she and her family live, Hannah is given a diary for her tenth birthday, and in it she records the dramatic story of her journey to America in 1901.

Napoli, Donna Jo (2005). *The King of Mulberry Street*.

Synopsis: In 1892, Dom, a nine-year old stowaway from Naples, Italy, arrives in New York and must learn to survive the perils of street life in the big city.

Pastore, Clare (2001). *Fiona McGilray's Story: A Voyage from Ireland in 1849*.

Synopsis: Follows teenager Fiona McGilray as she and her family leave Ireland during the time of the Potato Famine and travel to their new home in Boston.

Polacco, Patricia (1988). *The Keeping Quilt*.

Synopsis: A Jewish immigrant family passes on their story from their Russian homeland through their family's clothing.

Rael, Elsa Okron (1996). *What Zeesie Saw on Delancey Street*.

Synopsis: A young Jewish girl living on Manhattan's Lower East Side attends her first "package party" where she learns about the traditions of generosity, courage, and community among Jewish immigrants in the early 1900s.

Recorvits, Helen (2003). *My Name is Yoon*.

Synopsis: Disliking her name as written in English, Korean-born Yoon, or "shining wisdom," refers to herself as "cat," "bird," and "cupcake," as a way to feel more comfortable in her new school and new country.

Ross, Alice (1996). *The Copper Lady*.

Synopsis: This tale is set in 1880s France as a young boy visits where the Statue of Liberty is being built and decides to stow away. Andre decides to stow away on the ship that will bring it to America.

Sandin, Joan (1981). *The Long Way to a New Land*.

Synopsis: In 1868, a family leaves Sweden in search for a better life in the United States.

Sheth, Kashmira (2004). *Blues Jasmine*.

Synopsis: When twelve-year-old Seema moves to Iowa City with her parents and younger sister, she leaves friends and family behind in her native India but gradually begins to feel at home in her new country.

Tan, Shaun (2007). *The Arrival*.

Synopsis: In this wordless graphic novel, a man leaves his homeland and sets off for a new country, where he must build a new life for himself and his family.

Tarbescu, Edith (1998). *Annushka's Voyage*.

Synopsis: The Sabbath candlesticks given to them by their grandmother when they leave Russia in the late 1800s help two sisters make it safely to join their father in New York.

Yep, Laurence (2000). *The Journal of Wong Ming-Chung*.

Synopsis: Wong Ming-Chung ventures across the ocean from China to seek fortune for his family during the Gold Rush's excitement and hardships. Though he feels alienated by the other miners, Wong chases his dreams.